Sealed With A Kiss

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/56853598.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Jack Crawford, Bedelia Du Maurier, Mason Verger, Abigail Hobbs, Alana Bloom, Margot Verger, OC Side Characters - Character, Beverly Katz, Freddie Lounds, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price
Additional Tags:	Friends to Enemies, Enemies to Lovers, Canon Compliant, Canon Relationships, Canon Rewrite, situationship - Freeform, the main plot is somewhat still used as much as possible, Hannibal retelling but gayer, Mind Manipulation, Toxic Relationships, Hannigram - Freeform, mlm, No Smut, Fluff and Angst, Will is a Mess, Murder Husbands, Minor Character Death, major character death coming soon
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2024-06-23 Updated: 2024-11-10 Words: 100,151 Chapters: 30/?

Sealed With A Kiss

by rotted_raven

Summary

Will Graham's mind was not his own. He could feel himself cracking-- going insane even-- under the pressure Jack Crawford put onto him. He often found himself clinging to anything or anyone that could return even the slightest bit of sanity to him. He did so with Dr. Alana Bloom and now Dr. Hannibal Lecter. But instead of the peace he found with Alana, Will Graham found something much darker and much more dooming in his kiss with Hannibal. With one kiss, Will had locked himself in a deadly dance with his psychiatrist; one in which the melody was uncertain and unwritten.

Will did not know if the music or his dance partner would lead them to their deaths or a new life, but all he could do now was sway along with them.

-Updated as regularly as possible
-Follows canon as much as it can but adds some gayer and angstier scenes
-Written by both myself and Elliot_Prose.

Prologue

Hannibal had been a psychiatrist for a very long time, but never in his many years had he experienced romantic tension between himself and an unofficial patient. He, on multiple occasions, had been aware of the desires of his patients. However, this was drastically different. While previous patients would make extreme attempts to connect to him he would quickly unravel them and deflect them. With Will Graham he allowed the rope of romance to be forged and wrapped around his neck.

It was awful and very unlike him.

Will Graham was an experiment and nothing more. He kept the deformed clock drawing at his desk as proof it was nothing more than professional interest. Yet with each new clock or each flash of light he inflicted upon him he felt an unfamiliar sense of regret. He continued on each session in an attempt to push the newfound feeling aside, yet it only made the lasso of love even more tight around his neck. The cord was choking him.
The kiss they had shared did not help to sever this line that held him.

Just thinking about the kiss made the foundations that kept him from hanging more and more unstable.

The intimate conversation about the beauty of death as they looked over photos from a crime scene he created had woken something in them both.

The attention he held as he watched Will's mind working to uncover him with no success.

The desperation Will held in his eyes as he stared across the desk at him.

The hands and the way they moved into his neatly styled hair as they both leaned forward.

The forbidden feeling of belonging on the other's lips.

The regret that followed.

The verbal agreement to never do it again despite the urge to repeat their mistake until they both were gasping for air.

It was torture. It was torment too violent for the Chesapeake Ripper.

Even now, almost a week after the 'mistake' he could still smell Will's aftershave mixed with his cologne. He could still taste Will's lips like someone could still taste their favorite meal. He could feel the pressure of longing and desperation against him. Oh, how the longing tasted on his lips like ambrosia. It was maddening. He needed to end his torture.

"Are you even listening Doctor?" Will asked accusingly, forcing Hannibal back to reality.

"I apologize, I seem to be slightly distracted this evening." He replied, trying to keep his focus on Will's words and not his lips.

"Aren't we all," Will commented sarcastically, "I was saying I was confused."

"How so?" Asked as he took note.

"I know we discussed my pursuit of romantic relationships is an attempt to gain control over something within my life. That feels only half true. With Alana I can't help but agree with you. The spark was non existent. However, with you—….. that's where things get tricky." Will explained as his eyes locked with the ground. He could not bear to face Hannibal as he opened his mind to him.

Hannibal let out a light sigh and set down his notebook. “Will, am I your psychiatrist or are we merely having conversation?”

“The correct answer is…. Yes.” Will replied.

“In that case, would you prefer my answer as a psychiatrist or as your friend?” Hannibal asked.

“Whichever is best.” He answered.

“My hypothesis is this: I am a source of stability in an otherwise unstable world. The kiss we shared was an attempt to regain that stability your mind has robbed you of. The only difference between Doctor Bloom and myself is the thrill of that kiss being shared with a man who is also your psychiatrist.” Hannibal explained, his heart aching as he spoke, “However, that does not mean I am opposed to being that stability.”

“With all due respect, Doctor, speak plainly. Don’t dance around me with your fancy words and no metaphors.”

“Allow me to be that stability you desire.” Was all Hannibal offered as he slightly leaned forward in his chair.

Will, shocked by his words, abruptly stood from the chair he was sitting in. For the first time in their session Will’s eyes locked with Hannibal’s in an attempt to read him. Nothing could be uncovered by the silent interrogation, which scared Will. He could read anyone, he could understand anyone’s design, but Hannibal was that exception. His design was unknown to Will, and that was terrifying.

“I-…… I need time to consider.” Will answered as he sped for the door, “Goodnight Doctor Lecter.”

And then Will made his way through the door, shutting it behind him.

And just like that Hannibal was alone once more. Though it was relieving to be back in the comfort of solitude, the uncertainty of Will Graham remained. The noose was still firmly wrapped around him and Will refused to ease it with acceptance of him. It was an infuriating and suffocating feeling to know that another man was beginning to influence him. Something would have to be done. He would have to consume Will if he were to ever be free. Either he consumed Will's being, turning the man into an extension of himself, or he consumed Will's body. Whichever way he did decide upon would not be an easy one. Will Graham was the most intelligent and intriguing man he ever met. He would have to be quick and careful. If he was not, the rope would hang him. It was best to burn the rope and accept the burns that came with it than to risk death by hanging. This would become Hannibal's design, and it was one sealed by a kiss.

Monster unveiled

Doctor Hannibal Lecter always kept the hour before Will's session empty so he had time to prepare. He was highly empathetic and noticed even the smallest details so his space had to be perfect. During that hour he properly organized his drawings; placing the ones that may connect himself to any crimes in his desk for safe keeping. He vacuumed and wiped down every inch of the place to ensure not even dust or a single strand of hair could give him away. As a final touch he moved the two chairs closer than he kept them for other patients. It was a tedious task that he endured but it was necessary in his eyes.

When Will's session inevitably rolled around Hannibal waited on the other side of the door for a sign of his obsession in the waiting room. When he noticed it he silently opened the door to acknowledge his presence.

"Come in." was all he said as he continued to hold the door open.

There was a comfort to be found within the familiarity of Hannibal Lecter's office, one that certainly made Will uneasy the more he thought about it. He did not want to be comfortable here, and yet he did. Hannibal had become his safe space, his anchor.

Ever since Will Graham had met Doctor Hannibal Lecter, something had simply slotted into place. As if Will had been the only person in the world who knew how to play chess, and Hannibal had walked into the room with a board.

Will did not believe in fate, and yet the way in which he was drawn to Hannibal was hard to describe in any other terms. Hannibal was his perfect match in every way. The cleanliness of Will's chaos, the light to his dark, though he was sure Hannibal had darkness within him too. No one who didn't kept their eyes so purposefully placid.

Will rose from his chair, nodding a small greeting as he entered Hannibal's office and sat down in his usual chair, tension bleeding from his muscles.

Hannibal could almost smell his tension as it seeped from every pore but he dared not to address it just yet. No, he had to wait for the right moment. If he didn't he may scare away the introverted man, which he wouldn't stand for. He looked Will up and down as he walked to his chair and sat down before he mirrored the behavior and sat in his own. He grabbed the notebook he kept just for his sessions with Will from the cushion and took a pen from his suit pocket.

"Now," he said as he clicked his pen, "where would you like to begin this evening?"

Will watched Hannibal's movements, eyes sharp and analytical. Nothing would slip past his gaze. Especially not when he was on guard, though in this environment that wasn't the case. He was calmer here than almost anywhere else. Other than his own home, of course.

Where to begin. Will was terrible at that. He sighed wearily.

He wanted to speak about many things. He wanted to speak once more about the kiss they shared and how it was tormenting him equally as much as the lost time he experienced. He wanted to tell Hannibal about his sense of fear and uncertainty when he was not near. Instead, he focused on business. Will was not ready to be known in his entirety yet.

"Jack has me chasing after another killer."

As Will spoke Hannibal jotted down a note or two. That was most likely the source of Will's tension in Hannibal's eyes. The sigh as well was also worth noting. It showed that the pressure Jack Crawford put onto him was taking a toll.

"Another? Perhaps your old mug analogy is becoming more and more accurate. How does this killer compare to the others?"

Though he tried to disguise it as care for Will Graham, Hannibal cared more for the crimes themselves. Have they discovered more of his own work? Have they found evidence that could lead to his arrest? Though he enjoyed his time with Will, he enjoyed being fed the details of his own case much more.

“He is.....nothing special,” Will replied, “They’ve all just started to blend together at this point.” His head was far too crowded. He was worried about what that meant for his sense of self. He felt almost at capacity, a boat about to capsize.

Will was losing himself, and it was terrifying. He knew he couldn’t stop it, not unless he quit. And he didn’t want to quit. He didn’t want to stop saving lives. Even if it was slowly destroying his own. He would continue to repeat his name to himself and remind himself of the time. He would ruin himself for the sake of others.

“Hm….” Hannibal once again took note.

Blending together…. Definitely a telltale sign of mental illness. In fact, it was most common in dissociative disorders. He doubted Will had a dissociative disorder, but perhaps he could use this blending to mold the unstable man into something more useful instead of simply breaking him apart as he originally planned.

He could almost smell the distress in Will. He didn’t even have to look into his eyes to see his stress. Even with therapy he never seemed to admit he needed to quit, even if it was temporarily. While as a psychiatrist it was frustrating to deal with, the monster in a human suit enjoyed watching him fall apart. It intrigued him. He wanted to know what would happen if and when Will Graham finally broke.

Yet a different part of him, one that felt almost alien to him, didn’t want him to break. Hannibal never cared for anyone except himself, yet he found himself……concerned?….. for Will? He hated it. Will was becoming a weakness. He had to go.

“Tell me Will, why do you continue to do this kind of work? Outside the ‘saving lives’ concept. You were already doing so indirectly as a teacher. You were molding your students into agents who would save lives as well, so why trade that for this lifestyle? Is it the thrill or are you trying to appease Jack Crawford or Dr Bloom? Why do you strain yourself?”

Will sighed heavily at the question, grimacing as his eyes flitted around the room. He didn’t like the question, clearly. He hadn’t liked it the first time Hannibal had asked it and he certainly didn’t like it now. And Will particularly didn’t like the insinuation that he was

trying to *impress* or *appease* people. He wasn't some helpless stray begging for the praise of others. He was a self-sufficient adult man who, in most senses of the word, was a hermit. He didn't need anyone's approval.

"They can't do this like I can. Nobody can," Will replied, voice tired and low, "I can try and make people see how I see, but they can't. And as a result, people will die. Doctor Lecter, I have never been good at anything in my life other than this. It would be *wasteful* not to use it to help people. Even if it kills me." The ghost of a wry smile flickered across his face. Will had always held the opinion that he wasn't meant long for this world anyhow.

"You're right , Nobody can understand these killers like you. It's a rare gift that you have, but a gift is useless if it's broken. If your mind is breaking down you can't use that gift. You can fish with a rod but it becomes much more difficult without the bait."

Hannibal had been building the illusion of companionship with Will ever since he met him. Not one word he had ever said to him has been genuine. This very piece of advice he had just given was nothing but false support….. or was it?

He kept telling himself when he strung up bodies and placed his intricate scenes that he only behaved this way to make framing him easier. Yet a part of him dreaded it. The lies, or at least what he believed to be lies, seeped from his lips like pollen from flowers in spring. It attracted a ragged bee like he wanted, but unlike the flowers Hannibal didn't want to separate from the bee yet. He must. He had to. He was starting to get close. He was starting to make the connections. He had to push aside himself and follow through with the plan he graciously set for himself. And in order to do so, he needed to get just a bit closer to Will before he clamped his jaws onto Will's downfall.

Their chairs were already close, but Hannibal pulled his chair slightly closer. Their feet were next to each other and Hannibal could latch his hands onto Will's neck without leaving the chair now. He needed this level of closeness for what came next. He needed to force Will to meet his gaze. Will once said that the eyes were distracting. He hoped to distract him from the blatant lie he would tell with his dark brown eyes.

"But if you insist on pushing yourself beyond your limits, allow me to share the burden with you. I am your friend, am I not? The purpose of friendship is to confide and displace emotions. Allow me to be the rod to your line. If you stray too far or lose too much time, I'll reel you back in. Does that sound suitable to you?"

Will met his eyes, blue against brown. Hannibal's eyes held a shade of maroon. Will had never noticed before. He didn't make a habit of eye-contact.

Hannibal was close enough to touch him now, Will realized, and for a moment Will wondered if he would. He could feel the phantom of Hannibal's touch on his arm. It haunted him, though it had not even occurred. A false ghost. An illusion. A trick of the light.

Hannibal's words, soft and low, echoed around Will's skull in an oddly pleasant manner. Were they friends? Their relationship certainly tested the boundary between doctor and patient despite Will's attempts to the contrary. Hannibal was not a man who gave up that easily, as proven by the fact that he had pushed forward despite Will's comment of not finding him particularly interesting.

That was no longer true. In fact, he found Hannibal *very* interesting. He liked their conversations, their mental back and forth, their verbal chess match. And while this was not what was typically considered a "normal" friendship, Will was hardly the type of person that dealt in "normalcy" anyhow.

Hannibal seemed to be reeling him in with his own lure. It was an odd realization, and Will perhaps wouldn't have made the connection had Hannibal not spoken in fishing metaphors, a language Will understood very well. The closeness, the eye-contact. It was a calculated thing. For what end purpose, Will did not know. But he was a fisherman too. And a damn good one. Will wasn't sure he wanted to bite when he didn't even know what he was biting on *to* . Will knew just how sharp fishing hooks could be.

"I like to fish alone, Doctor Lecter," Will murmured. The moment felt intimate. "I am beginning to wonder if it was really Jack who sees me as a fragile teacup, and not you instead."

Hannibal smirked a bit at the comment. He wasn’t ready to let his walls down yet. Or better yet, perhaps he was simply trying to see how high Hannibal was willing to climb them. Evidence led to the first but there was always a possibility with Will. He was complex and intriguing that way.

“I’m sorry you feel that way,” he said as he debated putting a hand on Will’s arm or around his neck. He wanted to watch his eyes burn with life at his touch yet wanted to see them fade into death. It was an ongoing struggle he may have to speak about later with Bedelia. Oddly enough, he decided against murder and cautiously laid his hand over Will’s, slowly doing so to keep himself from spooking the unstable man.

“In this scenario I wouldn’t fish beside you. I would simply switch out your line and lure so you could fish with more efficiency. I wouldn’t want to steal your catches from you, especially considering how passionate you are.”

He had Will hooked. Though he fought against the line, Hannibal was reeling him in with calculation and precision that made his struggle seem like a natural part of their dance. He knew that Will, like a scared bass, was so scared of the fisherman that he didn’t realize he was swimming upstream. He would tire eventually and gracefully surrender himself to Hannibal’s obsessive embrace. It was inevitable, just like they wanted it. That was the purpose. That was his design.

“Your own mind is failing you Will,” he whispered as he slid to the edge of his seat, bringing his face closer to Will’s but not too close for comfort. He needed to keep him on the line and invading his personal space too much would cut him loose. “What can you rely on if you cannot trust yourself? You can tango with insanity all you’d like, but you cannot tango alone. Allow me to lead the dance when you cannot trust your own footing. You are not alone despite your urge to be.”

Will's breath hitched as Hannibal finally broke down the barrier of touch. It felt electric. It made Will's skin burn and crawl with desire and revulsion. He didn't pull away. Hannibal had reached into his chest and taken his lungs, his fingers had found his heart and were tampering with his pulse. Hannibal's words reached Will's ears as if Will was underwater. A fitting image considering Will was sure he was the fish.

Will was caught within Hannibal's eyes, ensnared by his words. His head was starting to hurt, and whenever that burning pain happened it made it harder to think. Will was suddenly far too overwhelmed.

Will was the one that broke it. He stood, leaving the bubble of intimacy that surrounded the chairs. So close. Had they always been that close?

"Doctor Lecter, my mind hardly feels like my own any more," Will said, voice strained and shaking, "It *is* failing me. I don't trust myself. Not as much as I used to. I'm unreliable, I'm unstable. However," Will turned to face him. He did not meet his eyes. "I do not want you to have it any more than I want anyone else to have it. To place my head in the palm of your hands leaves me... *very* vulnerable. Do you want to take the place of the Stag within my own mind? Remove all of the killers and etch yourself so far into my brain that when I think I hear only your voice? You talk of dancing and fishing. I understand only one. You may be a good fisherman, doctor, but I am a better one, and I know when I've been snagged. It is an...alarming feeling," He huffed out a bitter laugh, "And I don't know what you hope to achieve. I don't know what your design is. But I am starting to believe that somewhere along the line, you may have deceived me."

Hannibal noticed immediately that he both lit with excitement and anxiety. Despite being a calculated person, he forgot to consider the idea that he was being too blunt. He watched as Will stood and loomed over him briefly before he too stood and walked away from the chairs. Will didn't have to use words to tell Hannibal that he was uncomfortable with the closeness. He took the notebook and walked towards his desk to give Will at least 15 feet between them. He was too focused on trapping Will that he scared him away.

"I do apologize. It was not my intention to make you feel as though I am trying to trap you. It was never my intention to do so. I simply meant for you to understand as both friend and psychiatrist my duty is to ensure you do not slip off the edge. I cannot do that if you don't speak to me with full trust. I apologize for appearing misleading."

He jotted something on the notebook again, this time more feverishly.

"As for the accusation about my supposed deceit, I cannot apologize for something I have not done. I am not trying to deceive you."

He took a few more steps towards his desk and set down the notebook on it. He then opened one of the drawers slightly. It was open enough for Hannibal to reach inside and grab the knife if Will made a sudden movement, yet it was closed enough to conceal the weapon from him as well.

He was too blunt and too reckless. He believed himself to be fishing but he was truly playing poker, and Will saw through his poker face. Oh how he hated for things to go this way, but he left himself no other choice. If Will walked out of the room alive he would be a suspect. He would be watched like a hawk. Jack Crawford would corner him through Will. He would be stapled against the whipping post, one nail at a time until Crawford finally allowed him to die. Meat would have to be taken off the menu, and Hannibal truly did love his carnivorous meals.

He dreaded what he knew he had to do. He would've loved to see how insanity drove Will Graham. He would've studied it and written down every minute detail. He even would've written a book about it in which Will was a martyr, and read it as he consumed whatever meat he harvested the night before. It would've been glorious. However, it couldn't happen now. No, it couldn't ever happen. As much as his heart ached for him not to, his mind urged him on. It was either Will or him, so Will Graham must die.

Or perhaps not.

Perhaps Will Graham was more entrapped in his net than he initially believed.

As Hannibal moved with his usual grace, Will felt himself taken back to a more simple time. Seeing his calm and swift motion for his desk reminded him of the ambulance a few nights— no– a few weeks before. Even in the midst of death Hannibal seemed to have grace that left him almost entranced. He noticed it on many occasions, especially during their other sessions. The way Hannibal would gaze up at him when Will was too distrusting to stay on the same level as him often silenced his strife. The way Hannibal would stalk towards him and press him against the ladder often sent a welcome chill down his spine. Though Hannibal was more blunt than usual, he was daring Will to learn trust as he often did in their other sessions. Will was yet again putting up walls in response.

As a silent apology Will stood and followed a similar path to Hannibal's desk, his eyes slowly making their way to Hannibal's once more with each movement. Eye contact had become less difficult with Hannibal, but it seemed to give his eyes the ability to wander. As Will's eyes finally focused on Hannibal's instead of the way the suit sat perfectly on him, he gave a weak smile. Though Hannibal had invaded, he needed to consider that he did so out of love not manipulation.

“I– I know. You’re trying to keep me from the ledge.” Will said as he leaned his back against the desk, his arms holding him so he could watch Hannibal take the hint and move closer to him, “Just more proof I’m not myself.”

Hannibal in response stepped closer, their eyes locked and their bodies now taking in the same space. They both were close enough to touch now, and a part of Will wanted them to. Perhaps with a hand on the back of his head or on his chest would finally calm the storm in his mind.

“You’re not yourself,” Hannibal stated as he leaned closer , taking in the wretched aftershave that often made his office reek of Will, “But you’re where you’re meant to be. By being here in this moment you acknowledge the fact that your mind needs to be reshaped until it is glorious once more. Say the words, and I can help you mold your mind like clay until we create something we both can be proud of.”

Oh, how easy Hannibal made it to surrender. All it took was two words and six letters. With a small whisper of the words, Hannibal would devote himself to Will’s cause. That level of dedication was rare in friendship, but perhaps it was not their friendship that warranted his words.

Perhaps it was their bodies too abnormally close for friendship and their shared kiss that drove Hannibal Lecter. And perhaps it was that same motivator that caused Will to hold the back of his head and pull him closer.

He would never speak the words, but he would have Hannibal help him nonetheless.

Their lips were only an inch apart now and their heads were pressed against each other similarly to their bodies. Hannibal stood slightly above him as he too leaned against the desk. It was both exhilarating to hold Hannibal above him but also peaceful to feel his arms on either side of Will as if he was protecting and hiding Will from the horrors of the world outside this moment. Breathing in the same air as him made all of Will’s worries disappear like a shell on the shore. As he breathed Hannibal in he felt as if he was breathing in security. Perhaps Hannibal was all he needed to finally feel sane .

Then he looked away and saw the knife peeking out of the drawer. The distrust from the moment before suddenly became warranted. Why did a psychiatrist have a knife in his

drawer?

Will had never been more scared of Hannibal than at this moment.

Something cold settled in the pit of his stomach, his veins rushing with sudden adrenaline. And then everything slotted into place.

Hannibal Lecter was a killer. No, not just a killer. Hannibal Lecter was the Chesapeake Ripper.

Will let out a soft exhale, looking at Hannibal in understanding.

It was a special thing, a rare gift, to finally see - *See? See?* -Hannibal at last. Something within the depths of Will's mind cooed that it was *beautiful* . Will wondered what would have happened had he not realized; had Hannibal not miscalculated and pushed just a little bit too hard. It had been a delicate dance, and Hannibal had tripped.

The fishing line was severed.All that was left for Will to do was swim.

"Not today, Hannibal," Will said gently, eyeing the drawer and pushing Hannibal away from him. It was the first time he would speak the man's name. "Not for a while, I don't think. I didn't realize this was a game of cat and mouse. Rude of you to not say so. We haven't been on equal playing grounds, doctor," Will shook his head, a wry smirk stretching across his face, "Seeing as I don't fancy being the mouse, why don't we change the game?" His eyes met Hannibal's once again.

Oh yes. This should be interesting.

"I think I'd be up for a game of tag," Will started towards the door, movements slow and measured.

“Tag hm?”

Now this was a change of pace. Hannibal had been an apex predator for so long the idea of being hunted was alien. No, he wasn't being hunted. He refused to be hunted. He saw it as a waltz; a waltz Will has chosen to lead. The melody sang of blood, death, and a passion he hadn't felt in a very long time. Though he enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, he craved the tension and intensity of the dance he would share with Will Graham. It would be beautiful.

Then again, Hannibal was not the one leading this Waltz. Will could easily lead Hannibal straight into the unforgiving arms of Jack Crawford even if he claimed he wouldn't tell him. If he would dance he must only have one partner. This wasn't a dinner party, this was a date. It was a romantic dinner between them and he couldn't trust Will not to bring a 'plus one' later.

He watched Will take the first few steps before he followed after him, carefully and graciously making haste for the door. The murderous intent glowing in his eyes and pouring out of him was clear as day now. There was no use trying to hide it from Will Graham now. For the first time ever Doctor Hannibal Lecter unzipped the human suit and revealed the monster inside. He chased Will as if there was not another person on earth but them, because in Hannibal's eyes they were the last people on earth.

"I'd like to implement a head start, considering you've had the upper hand for a while and I need to make my arrangements. Give me a day. I promise I won't tell good old uncle Jack," Will reached the door, his hand on the handle, "Catch me if you can, doctor Lecter."

Hannibal ached to taste him. He imagined that Will's heart would taste sweet like pure sugar with a tangy aftertaste. Will's lungs would taste more like a pork chop than a dessert. He already knew which wines he wanted to pair with which organs. His mouth watered at the idea as they both became closer and closer to the door. He was close enough to Will now to taste it.

Yet that alien side of him, the one that saw Will as more than a pig for slaughter, stopped him from feasting. This side of him was starting to become a hindrance now. This hindrance was *happy* to see Will make it through that door. What is this feeling? It went beyond mere fascination. It went beyond friendship. It went beyond his desire to be free of Will's noose. What was this? Why must it keep interfering with his plans? It was becoming frustrating and infuriating. Then again he was grateful for it. He had danced alone in a ballroom of death and destruction to a song that became too tiring to bear. Will, by making it out this door, finally

gave him a new tune and a dance partner for the first time in his blood-stained life. Perhaps the dance wouldn't be so awful after all.

When it was over they would dance in a field of corpses and feast upon those who dared to oppose them. Hannibal would stain both their hands crimson with blood and desire. When this was over they would share both blood and blame. This dance, or game of tag as Will called it, was starting to feel like Will's proposal more than his threat of demise.

Oddly enough, Hannibal planned to accept it, and tie them both together with blood. The dead would be their ring bearer and death himself would officiate their wedding. For the first time in a long time Hannibal gave a full smile at the thought. This dance with Will Graham would be radiant, and in its deadly wake Hannibal hoped he would emerge victorious with Will holding his blood stained hand. The Chesapeake Ripper just found himself a mate, and he would not rid himself of that mate like most other animals did.

And with that, Will Graham was gone.

Escape

It had been only twenty four hours since the escape. During that time Will reluctantly surrendered his dogs to Doctor Bloom and went into hiding alongside Freddie Lounds.

He didn't trust Freddie as far as he could throw her, but if ever there were an impressive accomplice, it would be her. It was because of the distrust that it worked so beautifully. Freddie didn't trust anyone. And she especially didn't trust Hannibal Lecter.

He knew that by now Hannibal had probably started to turn Alana and Jack against him. He wondered why that fact didn't bother him more. But Jack was his boss and Alana had maintained her "professional curiosity". Will hadn't lost that much. Hannibal really had been the only person he considered a friend besides Beverly, but they weren't close. She wouldn't miss him.

Freddie Lounds was also the perfect choice, because they hated each other. Hannibal would not think to go to Freddie immediately. She wasn't in his inner circle. She wasn't even in his circle at *all* . The only reason he knew she wouldn't sweep the rug out from under him is because she knew she could get a good headline out of the deal. In fact, Will would pay her to write stories about him and the FBI's pursuit. It was as much a game to her as it was to him, just with lower stakes.

Hannibal liked her writing and attention too much to kill her anyways.

"You know, I've never seen you so calm Mr. Graham," Freddie said sweetly, "You almost seem sane."

"Shut the fuck up, Freddie." Will mumbled angrily in response

It was true. His demeanor had shifted. It was cold. Calculating. It felt like he was thinking clearly for the first time in *months* .

There came a certain freedom in running away from everything he knew.

He expected himself to feel more insane as he left behind any sense of normalcy he had, but he didn't. In fact, he finally felt *sane.* But even the newly sane William Graham found himself plagued by the mental parasite named Hannibal Lecter. He was sane, but at what cost?

The monster in a three piece suit surrounded every thought he held now.

When he scurried home to Wolf Trap earlier in the night he found himself worrying about Hannibal as he packed what few belongings he knew he could take with him. As he stuffed a flannel into a backpack he wondered how Hannibal was planning to follow him. Was he planning at all or was he disregarding the request for a head start and driving to the house as he packed?

As he surrendered his pack he thought about how Hannibal would trace them to him. Would he convince Alana to side with him? Would the dogs survive their game of tag, or rather, their chase?

As he met Freddie for coffee he imagined Hannibal reading the article that Freddie would write about him. Would Hannibal go into a fit of rage so violent that the knife would gut them both, or would the knife only gut him ? Would the monster or man unleash their wrath upon him? Which side of Hannibal would take action against them and the article?

And as he stepped into the back seat of Freddie Lounds's car he allowed himself to ponder what might've happened if he didn't notice the knife. It was clear that he would've caused Hannibal to break his promise for the first time by repeating the mistake they swore to never repeat. The uncertainty laid after their kiss. Would the knife from the drawer be used to slice his throat or would it be used to guard him against the horrors of their world?

Will Graham would've liked to assume the latter, but Hannibal's secrecy suggested the former. Hannibal Lecter was the type to rid himself of outliers and liabilities at the first chance he was presented with.

However, as the ginger woman stopped the car, allowing Will to exit the car and disappear into a nearby forest, Will found himself thinking about what might've been had Hannibal not slipped.

Will in the back of his mind could see a cabin similar to the one he always imagined for himself. Though it seemed rustic on the outside, the interior was both expensive and tasteful. The sound of Mozart pulled Will's mind inside and to the long black dinner table. As he turned to his right he could see Hannibal with his usual neat hair and a black sweater as he tossed the salad that would be presented with their meal. When Will would remove his glasses and toss them onto the table, Hannibal abandoned the food on the counter and came to him. Will would complain about the struggles of his day and in return Hannibal would give him words of support in his flowery way. And with a simple kiss Hannibal would extract all his worries.

Abigail would walk to the table, followed by the dogs. She would sit in a chair between the two table heads reserved for the men. She would no longer have her usual anxious and fearful expression. She would no longer be sickly pale. Her scar on her neck would've long since healed. She would finally unveil a full and genuine smile. She would finally be a regular teenage girl.She would still break down or shut the world out, but that was to be expected. However, it would be balanced out with the intelligence, bravery, and empathy she received from her true fathers.

Over dinner they would reminisce over the moments that led them to this table. Will, in his usual sassy manner, would joke about the psychiatrist falling in love with his patient. In return he would be reminded that he was never Hannibal's official patient. They would laugh about the way they embarrassed themselves during dinner at Hannibal's home. Hannibal would watch as Will twisted the gold ring on his left hand as they spoke, smirking at him knowing it was Hannibal who put the ring there. Abigail, though quiet, would be present at the table. She wouldn't be active with their banter but she would laugh alongside them. If she received teasing she would toss a tomato from the salad at the men with a smile. Will would throw one back and miss, leaving the tomato on the ground for Winston to devour after it hit him instead.

There would have been no shortage of *'I love you'* s or other endearing words between the three.

There would always be an abundance of joy and support.

It would've been a quiet but happy life.

It was a shame it would never happen now.

Instead, Will was alone as he walked through the dark forest with only a flashlight to guide him.

Will had found a cabin in these woods a few months earlier after getting lost in the middle of the night. One of the few perks of "lost time" would always be the things he discovered when consciousness was returned to him.

It was well hidden and had a small pond for fishing. He could be quiet, happy, and alone here for the time being. Given that he found the cabin a second time in the dark, he could hide there until he was either found or no longer the object of obsession.

The forest in its darkness was comforting. The sound of leaves shaking and falling in the wind was comforting to Will; it reminded him that he was alive and still free. The smell of tree sap and fresh air was soothing; it was a reminder that he was somewhere that Hannibal wouldn't think to go.

These woods served as a reminder that he survived the Chesapeake Ripper.

With some difficulty he found the cabin. From the outside it looked unkempt and run down, but when Will approached and stepped through the door it was neat and surprisingly put together. Though it was his second time finding the cabin in the dark it was not his second trip he ever took to it. He had visited and fixed the house to the best of his abilities on several occasions when he wanted to escape Jack Crawford's world and his own mind. Considering the fact that nobody ever followed him here, Will felt as though the place served its purpose.

Will dropped the backpack by the door and immediately crashed face first on the first couch he laid eyes on. He hit the cushions with a sigh of exhaustion; running from a killer and holding conversation with Freddie Lounds was draining work. Giving up his dogs was even harder work. He was tired both physically and mentally from the last twelve hours.

It had only been a few hours and he already wanted to end the game of tag.

But he couldn't surrender into the arms of Hannibal Lecter, not yet. He wanted to live a few days longer.

As he laid he could hear the familiarity of the owls and the unfamiliar sound of motion against wood planks. Will wanted to think nothing of it but paranoia took hold.

After a moment of laying on the couch Will Graham forcefully rose again to bring the backpack to the bedroom. He dropped the bag once more and changed into his usual sleepwear. With some luck, he would get some peaceful sleep to combat his peace-less day. Before he would get that sleep Will felt the need to check the grounds first. For all he knew Hannibal was already here. He needed to prove to himself that it was not the case.

He dug a flashlight out of the backpack and slowly made his way to the door, though he paused before opening it. There was the sound of muffled, animalistic breathing on the other end. An antler scraped against the rough wood of the door, a sound that made Will shudder.

He would not be going out tonight.

He turned back to the bedroom and put the flashlight back into the bag before he crawled into the bed. As his stomach hit the sheets and his head hit the pillow a wave of exhaustion washed over him once more. Unlike his exhaustion from the couch, this wave was much stronger. Perhaps it was for the best that sleep took him before his mind could. Who knew where his thoughts would lead him.

As Will felt the cold grip of sleep tightening around him he allowed surrender. His last thought before he drifted into the deathlike state of sleep was of Hannibal and what the day would bring for the two of them. Would there be blood, death, or a more dangerous third thing?

Though the uncertainty was terrifying, sleep did not allow him to dwell. Instead, it forced Will into a deep and well deserved slumber.

Sleep

His silent prayers for peaceful rest were not answered. Instead of calmness his slumber greeted him with the terror of nightmares.

The season had changed, leaving the trees of the forest without their leaves but with plenty of snow in its place. As Will sighed he could see his breath being taken from him. Despite the cold air and the snow at his feet, Will felt a sense of heat at his back. He turned, seemingly against his will, to find the cabin ablaze. As he stood and watched the scene a shadow shaped like a man emerged. It gripped the same knife that Will found in Hannibal's drawer and seemed to wear the same suit. Any form of daze Will had in his dream state was replaced with pure primal fear.

Will took a few steps backwards and away from the blazing building, his eyes refusing to tear away from Hannibal as he seemed to grow antlers. It was a horrid scene that felt unnatural and only seemed to get worse as the monster's skin turned black. It was when Hannibal's hair seemed to detach and melt from his head did Will finally begin to run.

He had no concept of where he was running to, but he knew it was his only chance of survival. Even in nightmares Hannibal Lecter— or whatever he was now— would always be dangerous.

As Will sprinted through the forest he could hear feet– no, *hooves* – behind him. With each step Will took, the monster took two. Will could practically feel it creeping closer and closer as they chased him. No matter how fast Will ran the beast was always faster. There was no way to outrun it, but Will still tried.

As Will ran he glanced back at the creature to see how close he was to capture. When he did so he was met with Hannibal's piercing brown eyes. The facial structure on the beast was still Hannibal Lecter, but the rest of him had contorted almost beyond recognition. Will thought that he would always consider Hannibal beautiful, but he was clearly wrong. This version of him– if it was considered him at all– was horrendous and appalling.

Just before he could return his attention to what laid ahead, he tripped over a branch that was hidden in the snow. As his face connected with the cold snow and hard dirt Will let out a

groan of discomfort and pain. He did not allow himself to dwell on that pain; he couldn't with the monster at his back. He turned onto his back and quickly grabbed the branch just as the stag creature launched at him. Just as the beast leaped, Will swung the branch into its side, forcing it to join him in the snow.

Will slowly regained his balance and stood as the light snowfall began to fall over the left side of the creature's stomach. Will approached it slowly; each step he took was cautious and calculated. He kept the branch raised and tight in his hands, not daring to let go of his only defense. His eyes did not leave the beast as he stepped. He would not allow himself or the stag man to make any sudden movements. If the monster moved, Will would hit it again and again until it did not risk motion. No chances were being taken tonight.

The monster did not try to stand. Instead, it locked eyes with Will in silent begging. Will was unsure if the begging was for his surrender or its own life, but Will was sure he saw sadness or fear in them too.

The eyes locked with Will's reminded him of a more simple time; one in which he was sure of who Hannibal Lecter was. This gaze was almost identical to the ones that met him after Tobias Budge attacked him– or so he said. These eyes were the ones that silently begged Jack Crawford for proof that Will was alive after the attack and threats Tobias made; the eyes that lit up when that proof was presented to him. It was the eyes that stared back at Will now that would tell him that he was missed when he rejoined Hannibal's side. It was these beautiful brown eyes on this monster that often asked him to never leave again; to stay if only for another moment longer.

This monster was not Hannibal, but those deep and passionate eyes were.

It was Hannibal who begged.

Will could never say no to those pleading eyes.

He lowered the branch, his focus not wavering from the beast. It watched him in return as one edge of the branch met the snow once more. With unspoken permission the stag pulled itself onto its two hooves once more. And for a moment there was understanding between Will and the stag creature.

Will did not take his focus off the stag. He took the sight in, studying it in his own way. He took note of the two hooved legs that it stood on and the suit pants they were covered with. The three piece suit covered most of the creature's pitch black skin, but it was still visible on its hands, neck, and face. The antlers matched in color and seemed to blend into the beast's head. A monster in a suit, how fitting.

In return the stag studied Will, but not to take in his features. Instead the creature analyzed him for weakness.

Will Graham was the prime example both a survivor and of a human cockroach. It did not matter if the stag bit or tore at Will, he would still fight against the inevitable. The stag could impale Will with its antlers and he would brush it off and push forward. How does an animal kill someone that refused to die?

Will took a gamble and dropped the branch entirely. He then extended his now free right hand to the beast. Confused and reluctantly the stag mirrored him, placing its right hand over Will's. As Will's fingers clasped the stag's he noticed a change in the creature.

The stag's antlers seemed to shrivel and die, reverting back into hair. The hooves faded into black dress shoes and the darkness of the stag's skin was absorbed by a shade more human. The suit remained, but changed from a dark gray to a muted shade of beige instead. The monster was gone and Hannibal Lecter was returned to Will.

Will, upon seeing the psychiatrist, was filled with both joy and anger. He was happy to see him instead of the monster that chased him, but he was also angry because that monster was also him. They shared eyes, and no amount of change could erase that from Will's mind. To Will, the stag and the man were one and the same.

Hannibal watched Will process these emotions with his usual face of admiration, which only seemed to anger Will more. Why must Hannibal be so calm as Will suffered?

Will wanted to slap the admiration off of Hannibal's face, but his body involuntarily pulled the man into an embrace instead. His chin found its way to Hannibal's right shoulder just as Hannibal's left hand found his waist and pulled them closer together. Will did not want it, but the embrace felt uncomfortably natural. It felt as if this were his place; as if this was where he belonged.

It felt as if they were meant to surrender or give in to the other.

Yet, despite their surrender, knives appeared in their free hands.

Will watched over Hannibal's shoulder in horror as the knife in his left hand grew closer and closer to the man holding him. He tried to force his hand away but it continued on until it pressed against the man's back. Just as he watched the knife impale Hannibal's heart from behind he felt a piercing pain in his own. Hannibal's hand was forced as well.

As Will gripped Hannibal's suit in pain the truth became clear.

They were meant to destroy each other just as they were meant to give in to each other.

They ripped the knives from each other, both letting out a wince of pain in response. Hannibal dropped the knife in his right hand and used it to grip Will's hair, slightly tugging it so they locked eyes once more. Will did not protest. They needed to see and to hold each other in their final moment.

"Is……. is this….. our design..for each..other?" he asked as he gasped for air and clung to Hannibal like he would to life.

Hannibal did not respond. Instead, he pressed his lips against Will's. There would be no more words between them. Instead, there would be one more mistake between them before they died.

Will did not resist. In fact, he did the opposite. He did not shy away from Hannibal now, instead he embraced him with an eternity of pent up passion and desire. He allowed and embraced their kiss of death. He encouraged Hannibal as he sucked any remaining life from his lips. If he were to die, he wanted to die knowing that, despite their destruction, Hannibal was equally desperate for him as he was for Hannibal Lecter.

Yet before he could die in the man's arms Will's eyes opened to find him back in the cabin.

With a tired grunt he turned to the other side of the bed and found it empty. A sense of disappointment shot through him, but he didn't understand why.

Instead of dwelling on the feeling he sat up and took in his surroundings. The cabin was intact and there was no sign of a fire ever being there. He pressed his hand subconsciously against his back and found no evidence of wounds on him.

It was only a nightmare.

Will was still alive and he was still in the game of tag. He was not caught. He had not surrendered to Hannibal yet.

As Will stood and began to prepare himself for another uncertain day he thought about the events of his dream. People often talked about the meanings of dreams, but Will wasn't sure if he wanted to dissect his own to uncover the possible meanings. He especially wasn't sure if he wanted to know what his subconscious was trying to tell him through yet another mistake with Hannibal. He wanted to chalk it up to stress and fear instead. He had to, or it would mean another surrender to the Chesapeake Ripper.

Will would not give in. He had to push forward and remain on the run even if his own mind was telling him to embrace Hannibal and his fatal beauty, and that was exactly what he would do.

Dinner Party of Predators

Hannibal canceled all of his appointments for the week in order to pour his focus into his waltz with Will. He was not in the mood to endure the infuriating presence of his patients when he could be on the hunt. They were all simpletons, which he hated.

Instead, he carved into the spleen of one of his previous victims. Cooking was always calming to him, but today was the exception. He couldn't silence his thoughts as they spiraled towards Will Graham. He thought of how and when he would show himself again. He knew through Doctor Bloom that he had taken off and left behind his dogs. She was worried about him and he used that to his advantage. When she visited Hannibal, he planted the idea in her head that Will was experiencing delusions and was becoming a danger to himself. He lied by explaining that Will attacked him under the belief that he was the Ripper. Doctor Lecter theorized that this accusation was projection made by the part of his mind controlling his "lost time". By disguising it as concern, Hannibal hinted to the doctor that Jack Crawford may need to get involved. With the slightest bit of luck, he would have the FBI turned against Will Graham.

Now that he had almost everyone Will knew in Hannibal's pocket he was able to cut down the places he could run to. Less places for Will to run meant less places for Hannibal to look.

Hannibal may not have eaten Will Graham yet, but he had feasted on his reputation and his friendships. He believed Will to be alone now, which meant the man believed he had no choice but to face him head on.

After he dined on his spleen he decided to get working on tracking Will down. He had given him the head start he asked for so now he must work to catch up. Will didn't have many friends. Those he did have were now loyal to Hannibal's lie. That gave Will only two options.

One, he could hide alone without allies and lure the ripper in when he was ready.

Or two, he would seek out Freddie Lounds and attack Hannibal through the press.

Through their interactions Hannibal knew that Will, despite wanting to choose one option; he was not stupid enough to. No, he would take whoever he could. There was strength in both numbers and uncertainty after all.

He quickly cleared the dining room table and rushed to a room he liked to consider his study. From there he grabbed a sheet of paper and began to write a few simple words in his gracious lettering. He didn't write much, he preferred to converse in person when it came to such important matters. He simply wrote:

'Miss Lounds, I believe I have a story for you concerning a new friend of yours. Perhaps two sources is better than one. I'd like to invite you to my home for a vegetarian dinner. Does 7:30 this evening suit you?'

He carefully placed the letter into an envelope and carefully sealed it with wax. He owned a phone and easily could've called or texted. Instead he sent the letter due to it being more difficult to trace. The contents were written to appear as if someone had tried replicating his handwriting. He wrote in a less formal manner than anyone was used to. If the letter was found it would be easy to successfully deny.

When the clock struck three am, Hannibal made his way to the Lounds residence. When he first met her he knew she may be a threat so he recorded every detail about her. She may have believed herself to be safe but a night or two of study between cases showed that she was not. He drove to the recorded address, not bothering with parking his car a safe distance away.In fact, he drove right to the mailbox as if he owned it. It was both too late at night and too early in the morning for anyone to notice his presence. He quickly placed the letter in the mailbox and disappeared as if he was never there.

He could've broken in if he felt the urge to. He could've taken her and used her to find Will if he wasn't already with her. Once he had what he wanted he could've harvested her kidneys and her lungs, yet he didn't. Will wanted this to be a tag, or a tango in Hannibal's eyes. The game of cat and mouse was over. Will was no longer simple prey and would not be treated as such. They must meet willingly when he was ready. He wouldn't force their next encounter. Instead, he would force the hand of Miss Lounds. She would have no choice but to let curiosity overrule fear and dine with the Chesapeake Ripper once more.

He knew she wouldn't be able to resist curiosity, she was like the cat that way. One day it would be her demise. In fact he wanted it to be, but not today. He promised a vegetarian meal

and he would keep his word for the time being.

And so at exactly 7:30, Freddie arrived at Hannibal Lecter's house, all dolled up and looking her best. She wondered what part she would have to play tonight.

There wasn't as much to prepare since he wasn't serving meat tonight, so he was not working as hard on the dish. He had a glass of red wine by him as he sliced tomatoes and onions on the cutting board when she arrived. If she knocked he didn't hear her, but she smelt her presence. He abandoned his dish and made his way to the door, slightly adjusting his suit to ensure its perfection before he opened the door.

"Miss Lounds, you look lovely," he expressed as he stepped aside, signaling for her to come in. "Dinner is almost ready."

Freddie put on a smile, one she used often for flattery. She stepped into the lion's den without flinching. She was a predator in her own right, though certainly not as dangerous as Will Graham or Hannibal Lecter.

"Why thank you, doctor," Freddie simpered, "It was so nice of you to invite me to dinner. I'm looking forward to it."

"I hope you don't mind a simple Tian Provençal." He commented, his 'accent' a little thicker as he named the dish. French dishes had a tendency to do that when he spoke of them. "If not I can make an alternative."

Hannibal knew that Will never liked her. That combined with the fact that she once tried to record a session between himself and Will made him also dislike her as a person. However, he respected her as a fellow predator and as a reporter. She was dedicated and ran into the face of danger for the sake of the story. She had more guts than most people he knew, and he valued her professionally for it. It would be that professional value that would keep her alive for the night.

He made his way to the kitchen, disregarding the vegetables on the board. Before her arrival he intended for the Tian to serve as an appetizer. He would've had his main dish after her *departure* . Then upon seeing her it was taken into account she was too valuable to be taken to slaughter.

"Please make yourself comfortable. There's a coat rack to your left if you'd like and the dining room is to your right. Would you like wine with tonight's meal?"

"I don't mind at all. Sounds absolutely lovely. And wine would be good, whatever you think best pairs with the dish. Thank you. " Freddie complimented. As if she knew what that dish even was. She counted on Hannibal to be polite enough to serve her something vegetarian, and that was good enough for her.

Hannibal loved the idea of hospitality. In his eyes it was similar to a Venus fly trap's natural collection of food. The fly trap lured the peaty flies into its mouth with a sweet scent of sugar and nectar before it closed its green jaws around the insect. Tonight's dinner was similar, only he would be sinking his teeth into her thoughts rather than her body. For him, the sacrifice of a vegetarian dish was worth the 'thanksgiving feast' he would have later. All he had to do was sway her into his corner.

Freddie hung up her coat and made her way to the dining room, heels clicking on the hardwood floors. She carried with her a sort of elegance and grace that was so very obviously put on to anyone that was smart enough to realize what she was playing at. Hannibal was certainly smart enough, but Freddie didn't care. They both wore false faces, similar to a masquerade ball. It was to be an amusing dance for the both of them.

If Freddie realized she was walking straight into the venus flytrap's open jaws, she didn't look it. Freddie was fierce and uncaring. She had been in worse situations than this.

Hannibal emerged from the dining room holding two dishes and a bottle of red wine for them both. He gently set the dish down where he had set the silverware and wine glasses, almost as if he assigned her seat. He then popped open the bottle's cork and poured their glasses with elegance.

"If it is not to your liking, don't hesitate to speak. I will prepare something else for you."

He waited for her to take a bite, refusing to eat before her. He didn't know where the habit came from, but it was a habit he held close like a knife.

"Now, you must be as eager as I am to talk business, so let's not waste any more time on idle chatter. I believe you've become…..close….. with Will Graham? How did that come to be?, if you don't mind me asking."

Freddie took a bite. It was delicious. She was about to compliment it, lay on the flattery, when Hannibal spoke. Her fork hovered in the air as she processed his words. She smirked.

Once he saw her eating he began his own meal, taking two gracious bites before setting his fork down and taking a small sip of the wine he poured.

"I wouldn't say that," Freddie hummed, taking another bite of food. Purposefully vague. She wanted Hannibal to tell her more about the situation before she said anything concrete.

When he received an answer that vague his neutral expression turned to one of disappointment. He wasn't surprised that she didn't give up the information instantly, but still disappointed nonetheless. After all, you can't get anything from a woman like Freddie Lounds if you didn't give first.

"Will has been…. Unstable…. For quite some time now. With this instability Will has become paranoid and has accused people of things they have no connection to. I fear he is becoming more of a danger to himself than he already was, which is why I called you here. You want a story and I want to see Will Graham safe. Perhaps we could come to some form of arrangement. Both Jack Crawford and I would be grateful."

Every word felt like hot cinders being poured out of his mouth. He preferred for Freddie Lounds to stay as far from this as possible from his plans for Will. He preferred not to have this conversation at all. He would prefer to have her heart in the oven and her eyes fed to Will Graham for dessert. Nothing about this was pleasant, but he had to keep up the act for the sake of finding the unstable and disheveled man he once called friend.

Freddie could see through the act. She wasn't stupid, and in fact she was an actress herself. It would be quite silly of her not to realize a good performance when she was being shown one.

Freddie took a few more bites, and a sip of wine.

"I don't know if you've read my articles, doctor, but I agree with you wholeheartedly," Freddie replied. And that was true. Will Graham was a highly unstable man. She wasn't scared of him, but then again she wasn't scared of anybody.

"What makes you think I have any more information on him than you do? You have therapy sessions with Mr. Graham. *I* do not."

"I've read one or two articles. I must say, your work is certainly unique. I quite enjoy your writing." he began as he took two more bites and then another sip of wine, "but we both know it isn't below you to take advantage of an unstable man if it meant something to you."

It wasn't in any way meant to be an insult. In his eyes it was simply an observation. He heard about her manipulating an agent to get into a crime scene. She once published one of Will's "explosions" and painted him as a more dark and twisted person than he was at the time. He didn't hold her need to put herself first against her. It was animal instinct. It was self-preservation and Social Darwinism at its finest.

"You're right, you don't have sessions with Mr Graham. However he left his therapy abruptly, left his dogs with our colleague Dr Bloom, and then disappeared. Jack Crawford and Dr Bloom have not heard from him since. That leaves only one ginger that he could have gone to."

Another two bites and a sip of wine. It was almost robotic the way he ate. He didn't dare indulge in a third bite or a second sip because it felt out of place for him. He had an image of grace and elegance to keep, and to him he did so by acting like he was savoring his dish and taking in each flavor. This dish could have used some veal with it. He really missed his regular dishes filled with "steak" or "pork".

"I've done my share. I don't ask for you to sacrifice your story; we both know you wouldn't even if death himself told you to. All I ask is you help me make it more interesting by sharing what information you have."

So the cat was out of the bag. Hannibal had been awfully smart. Freddie wondered if Will knew how quickly he would find out. Most likely. Will Graham wasn't a stupid man either.

So now Freddie had to think. To consider what exactly she wanted to divulge. It would be interesting, watching all of this go down. One thing she admired about Hannibal was just how much he did for amusement's sake.

"Mr. Graham didn't share a lot with me. He said he needed to disappear and fast. I tried to ask a question. Any good journalist would. But he was rather quiet about the whole thing. And calm. I've never seen him quite so calm, I must admit. You say he's gone off the rails. I'm not a psychiatrist, doctor, but to me it seems like he's the most sane he's ever been," Freddie smirked and took an indulgent sip of wine, "All he would really tell me is that he was running away from you. Nothing more, nothing less. Of course, I can make assumptions. Perhaps, once Graham's disappearance gets leaked on TattleCrime, I'll frame it as a lover's spat."

A slight smirk grew on his face. Hannibal for a moment considered letting her walk out and paint the scene as anything other than a lover's spat. It almost seemed fun allowing the FBI to start tracking his steps. It would be a thrill to live not knowing when or if the handcuffs would get locked around his wrists. It would be entertainment for them to try following his trail knowing he kept it well covered. Imagining it almost made him laugh. As fond as he was with Crawford as a toy, he wouldn't know the Chesapeake Ripper if he looked him in the eye or slapped him across the face. As intriguing and exhilarating as it sounded, it would never compare to having Will Graham back under his watch and having the noose around his neck loosened.

"Most sane he's ever been?" he repeated, trying to quickly come up with a believable lie, "quite the opposite. He has given into the delusions that the cases have caused. His hyperactive sense of empathy allows him to understand the motives and emotions of various killers. It allows him to become them briefly. However, since the Hobbs case Will has not fully stepped out of Garret Jacob Hobb's mind. Each case that followed replaced more and more of Will with Hobbs. Will Graham leans more toward dissociative amnesia than he does sanity, hence my urgency to find him."

He tried to avoid the truth like the plague. He dodged the fact that Will knows about the monster under the human suit. He covered Will's severe encephalitis the best he could, which helped against any questions Freddie may have about their therapy and how unorthodox it was. He hoped it was enough to satisfy her curious mind and convince her of his false motives. If not, she might not make it out of the house.

“Is there any information you could give that would help me track him down, or did he just give you accusations to write?”

“I am very aware of what Will Graham is capable of,” Freddie replied dismissively, “Though, if Will Graham is indeed inhabiting the mind of Garrett Jacob Hobbs, I believe he would have gotten to Abigail Hobbs first. That seems to be the furthest from the case. And I wouldn’t have helped him if I thought he was a danger to her. I rather like the girl. It would be a shame for her to be killed.”

She could smell the lie like a shark scenting blood. Bold of Hannibal to try that with her. Manipulators could be manipulated, but not easily.

“He’s in a nearby forest. I don’t know where exactly he had me drop him off, but he blended in quickly. And I doubt he’s there anymore. It seemed to be focused on moving through places quickly,” Freddie murmured, “For the record, doctor, Will didn’t give me much in the way of workable accusations.”

“Will in the forest. How fitting of him.”

He had expected Will to disappear into the city where the masses would provide the perfect cover. Then again, Will being alone in the forest for the time being made more sense. He did have an empathy disorder after all and he would’ve been overwhelmed by the emotions he felt in crowds.

And there was something more intimate about their chase leading them away from humanity and into the cover of trees instead. It would allow the primal and animalistic sides of them both to finally be unveiled in their entirety.

“Thank you Miss Lounds for your cooperation. As soon as our time is concluded I will use it to find him. Hopefully I get to him before he gets to Miss Hobbs. Abigail’s safety will be the priority of course. She is a surrogate child to us all.”

That much was the truth. Ever since Will had shot her father he had felt the urge to take his place. Perhaps it was his need to make Will happy that drove that paternal feeling, perhaps one of Will’s emotions had rubbed off on him. Perhaps it was old feelings he had buried with his sister rising from the ground to haunt him for his misdeeds. Either way, Hannibal felt responsible for her. Whatever he felt for Will was strong, but not strong enough to risk the child to reach him. He would only do so if he were truly desperate, and he wasn’t there yet.

With a few more bites of his food Hannibal finished the dish. He quickly chased the flavor of it with the remainder of his wine. He then waited for Miss Lounds.

“Of course, Doctor Lecter. I don’t want anything to happen to Abigail either,” Freddie cooed, her face morphing into something sickeningly sympathetic. “Though if Mr. Graham were to be hunting Abigail, I would think he wouldn’t choose somewhere so far away. Maybe I wouldn’t focus your efforts on Ms. Hobbs. Will Graham is…Deceptive. I recognize that trait. It’s one I have myself. Will Graham wants to have the home field advantage. He has no upper hand or other advantages to cling to; he’s desperate. A desperate and trapped animal like Will Graham won’t surrender. Not now; not ever. In fact, he will do anything to be free again. Tread lightly Doctor Lecter.”

Freddie finished the last of her salad, and sipped at her wine.

“My advice is not to focus on anything other than Will, if you want to find him. Abigail Hobbs will be fine. If I thought she was in any danger, I wouldn’t be saying this. I care about her too. But Will is going to disappear, and despite what he puts off, he can be very charming.”

Hannibal considered what the journalist was telling him. It had a sting of truth to it. Hannibal knew Will Graham well, but not well enough to know his moves before he made them. Hannibal was many things, but unfortunately psychic was not in that list. Anything was possible with Will Graham now. He could appear at his doorstep this instant or kill the people under Hannibal's influence to weaken him. If he were Will he would've done that. By killing Hannibal's associates and acquaintances he both neutralizes his own enemies and points a flashing arrow at Hannibal Lecter. If he were Will Graham, he would go beyond killing their

bodies, he would kill his reputation and everything they loved first for the treachery. After all, what did Will Graham have to lose now?

Now that he knew what he wanted to know he was starting to grow impatient. He wanted to finally start hunting his friend. It had been too long, and the monster under the suit was starting to grow restless.

Hannibal and Freddie cleared the table despite Hannibal's insistence for her to remain seated. Though she was infuriating to have in his kitchen, he did get dishes cleaned and put back into their proper places quicker than he did if he was alone. Once all evidence of their shared dinner was cleared, Freddie left the house with a smirk of satisfaction gleaming on her defined face. She believed herself to get a story worthy of putting her alongside the New York Times. And even if Hannibal decided to go back on his word she knew she had all the information she needed to spin the events into a web that suited her. Freddie had once again given nothing of importance and walked away with everything.

Hannibal shut the door behind her with a matching smirk. He knew exactly where Will was now. He had strategically placed his chess pieces on the board and with a few swift moves had left Will vulnerable. Will believed himself to be playing chess, but Hannibal had rigged the board in a way that left Will playing checkers. Will had not planned their dance (or as he called it, their game of tag) while Hannibal had planned it since his primal hunger for Will consumed him. After all, Will didn't appear randomly at the cabin with no memory of the journey as a result of lost time. No, Hannibal had forced Will's hippocampus into blindness as he worked. It may have looked the part, but by no means was it abandoned. In fact, Hannibal bought it and wore it down knowing that Will would hide there eventually. Hannibal left him there to "discover" it knowing his property would become his haven. Will Graham, like any other fish, had swam his way into a net. All Hannibal had to do now was rip him from the water and finally consume him.

The Hunt Begins

The second Freddie Lounds was a safe distance away from the house Hannibal shed his suit jacket and vest. Though he was below his usual standard of dressing he knew that both the vest and jacket would restrain him more than he wanted. He needed full access to each of his muscles and ligaments if their dance was to end in bloodshed.

As he shed both the physical suit and the human suit he wore, he found himself fantasizing the ways in which he would consume Will. He did this often when he was bored, but this time was the exception. This time he brainstormed out of excitement and impatience towards the upcoming hunt; he yearned to know what Will's kidney would taste like with a sweet marinade and fine wine. He had resisted the temptation for far too long.

He flew to the basement where he chose which weapon he would use. Rope would've been quite fitting for the occasion, especially considering the hold Will Graham had on the rope around Hannibal's neck. Though Hannibal would have loved to hang Will with the same noose of passion, it wasn't ethical for this hunt. Instead, Hannibal chose a sharpened hunting knife similar to the one from his desk. It was almost poetic. A knife triggered their dance and a knife would end it.

The knife handle was cold when he grasped it. The leather at the end of the blade had not yet been stained by the heat of his hands. The shining metal was cleaned frequently with Oil of Cloves, as was evident by the lack of marks or fingerprints upon it. He had constantly cared for it in hopes of using the hunting knife on someone *special.* As the Chesapeake Ripper admired his blade he could see the sad and scared brown Lithuanian eyes of childhood staring back at him. He could almost hear the words in those eyes as they begged and pleaded to spare Will Graham like a teenage girl defending their lover from their father's wrath. The eyes were ignored and silenced as the Chesapeake Ripper carefully sheathed the blade at his side. He would've preferred to give in, but his hand had been forced into the ropes that bound him. Though he would've loved to spare his unruly and twitchy obsession, there was no way he could. The monster could not risk capture.

With one hand on the sheathed knife and the other holding a closed container of soup, Hannibal made his way out of the basement and toward the front door, locking it behind him. There would be no uninvited guests in his home tonight.

Hannibal made his way to his car; sliding behind the wheel and turning the key. The car hummed to life in response. He waited a moment before he put his left hand on the wheel and his right hand behind the passenger seat as he backed onto the road. Once his car was on the road he quickly put the car in drive and pressed the gas lightly. The hunter had finally started making their journey to their prey.

The drive was a long one, but Hannibal did not mind. Patience was a virtue that he had grown familiar and almost comfortable with over time. The woods that led to the cabin was about 3 hours away from his estate, and the walk to the cabin would keep him moving well after sunrise. Hannibal would be starved by the time he reached Will and he knew that, but he hoped that hunger would be satisfied when he had Will Graham to devour.

He imagined the ways he would carve Will, each new way becoming more and more gruesome. Each display he painted in his mind was poetic in its own dark way. He knew that Will often thought himself to be ugly, but Hannibal would make him beautiful in death.

He would glow the way people do when they are loved , because he would be. In Hannibal's own twisted way, he would love Will. He knew from the second they made that "mistake" that his obsession with the profiler was more than mere professional interest. No, this was something more dangerous. Will had climbed the walls he set to protect himself. And as Bedelia warned, affection grew as a result. The affection wrapped around him like a noose, which made his desire to consume him so much stronger. Will was a weakness that Hannibal never expected. He was unsure of whether or not he should rid himself of it or embrace it.

He weighed his options.

Hannibal would always wonder what would happen if he pushed Will certain ways, but that curiosity was overwhelmed by the idea of having Will at the dinner table beside him. He got quite lonely cooking for one as often as he did. He would quite enjoy the idea of feasting with Will instead of feasting on him. He would adore the idea of Will being at the other head of the table every night, gazing at Hannibal as he stared back in awe. The menu would be diverse and would tend to Will's every need. Hannibal would branch out from simple rude people in order to satisfy Will's own hunger and desires. Will would provide the name and Hannibal would provide the knife that sliced them. The dishes would be simplified, but that would be a small price to pay for company at the table. If Will joined him willingly, they could be happy.

Hannibal would always wonder what would happen if he pushed Will too far and it led to Will's consumption. His body would be given for them to taste. He decided that Will's fingers would be eaten as an appetizer when he invited Jack Crawford to his home. For the main course, he and Jack would feast upon the kidneys since there were two. He planned to have them seasoned with paprika and perhaps a savory marinade, but then again that was subject to change. The official dish for Will's kidneys had not been selected yet.

Hannibal often thought of pairing Will's flesh with the wine gifted to him before one of his dinner parties. The deep crimson of the wine would represent his blood given to Hannibal to drink. Hannibal did intensive research into the bottle he was gifted. It was a cheap Chiante from a brand he had never heard of, but it held emotional value to him. After all, it was a gift from a friend. It only seemed fitting to open the bottle when he had that friend for dinner. Besides, he would need the whole bottle to numb the feeling that would follow after the meal. Though necessary, having his one true friend for dinner would be a horrific experience. The last time he ate someone he cared for it destroyed him. Only god knew what would happen if he ate someone he felt such primal yearning for.

The options were clear, but could he kill Will Graham? The primal urge in him ached to know what he tasted like. He felt that Will's skin would taste bitter but his flesh would be sweet like honey. Hannibal would be satisfied for a moment if he made himself a widower and consumed his mate like a spider. However, recent events have shown him that he cared for Will enough to consider keeping him alive. He looked forward to every session he spent with Will. He enjoyed being called to crime scenes because he knew he would be there too. He was connected to the man in a way he never had been with anyone. Seeing him outside his door before their dinners brought him unspeakable joy. Seeing Will run from him brought a deep sadness to him that he never felt before.

It seemed the answer to his own question was unclear.

Even as he parked the car on the wide shoulder of the road he remained unsure of himself.

Would he be able to kill him? Would he be able to kill him and consume him? Would he be able to consume him and turn him into art like he planned?

Even as he trekked slowly through the forest he questioned his own intentions.

What if he couldn’t kill him?

That didn’t leave him many options. The cat was already out of the bag, so to speak. There would be no undoing the hunt any more than there was a way to undo their kiss. The teacup was already shattered. Time would not bring the teacup back together. They couldn’t return to that kiss. They couldn’t return to the time where they found home instead of danger within each other. They couldn’t return to the time when their relationship was based on friendship.They couldn’t return to a time where they were mere strangers. They certainly couldn’t return to the world they had separated from each other. If he could not kill him there would be no chance of life past that moment.

Will Graham had to die. It was plain as day.

It was either that or imprisonment.

An idea entered his mind as he thought of imprisonment. Though it was inevitable that someone would find themselves in a cell, there was no evidence that specified which of the men it would be. Hannibal could easily have Will take his place.

No, framing Will was below him. He wouldn’t do so unless he had no other choice.

Will had to die, but he did not have to suffer.

To make Will Graham suffer would be quite rude.

No, Will’s death would have to be a swift one. Though he was now Hannibal’s enemy it did not mean that he needed to meet the same gruesome and inhumane fate. Will Graham was not a pig for slaughter. To Hannibal, he was the last other human in his small world.

Will Graham would not suffer. In fact, he would be given one last chance to repent and return to his rightful place beside Hannibal.

Hannibal, after many hours of driving and walking, found the small cabin. It was much different now. It looked more like home than it did when he left Will there. It looked occupied. The house looked loved. The house reeked of Will Graham now.

Hannibal approached the door just As Will Graham opened the same door to flee. As the curly haired man turned away from the door he locked eyes with his predator. His body froze in fear. The legs that had saved him from the man and the complexity of him twice before became weak and useless now. He was now at the mercy of the man for the time being.

“Hello Will,” the Chesapeake Ripper uttered in his usual soothing tone,”May I come in?”

Will stared at him, unable to move or speak. How did Hannibal find him so fast? He worked so hard to keep the small home a secret and Hannibal found it as if it was common knowledge.

Hannibal did not speak again. He would not embarrass them both with more shallow words. There were more important manners and meals at hand. Instead he took the key from Will with a gentle hand and unlocked the door behind Will. With a light push the door revealed the recently refurbished home and Hannibal invited himself in. After all, the deed was in his name so it wasn’t rude.

Hannibal did not look back as he walked in. Instead, he set the bowl of soup down at the small oak table and disappeared to the kitchen to grab bowls and spoons. Will did not bring either to the home, but Hannibal did. He intended from the beginning to share a meal in this home. He did not expect it to be their last meal together though.

Will watched him as he moved around *his* home as if he owned it. He could run, make another break towards freedom. It would be easy with Hannibal’s focus on the mystery dishes. Yet his body forced him to follow behind him back into the home. He could feel Hannibal holding the net, yet he swam toward him anyway.

He let Hannibal manage the meal as he sat at the head of the wooden table. They would share one last supper together as friends before they turned on each other. There was knowing which of the two in this situation would play the role of Jesus or Judas, but both intended to see the other nailed to the cross.

But before the war horn was blown, they would enjoy one last meal.

It would be their final supper before they exposed their hearts and crimson blood to each other in one last passionately violent dance.

The Last Supper

Chapter Notes

Just a few trigger warnings for the chapter!

This chapter will contain the following (Listed in order of appearance):

-Mentions of hanging
-Mentions of crucification
-obvious hinting at cannibalism
- stabbing
-physical violence
-mentions of mental abuse

I still hope you enjoy the chapter though, it's probably one of my favorites so far.

Jesus performed many miracles, but the most impressive of them would be the composure he kept during the last supper. As he stared across the table at Judas he managed to maintain love while knowing that his disciple and friend would be his downfall. Judas watched Jesus speak of the ways he had and would give his body and blood for others knowing that he would witness his last gift to them. Judas would be the reason the Romans nailed Jesus to the cross before the father, yet Jesus kept him at the table beside him. They both locked eyes over their final meal together. They both recognized their heartbreak and their ache to be fixed by the other. It was an ache that could never be satisfied. Their fates had been sealed and they were destined to undo each other. Both men, despite their love for the other, would doom each other. Only one of them could make it out of their affair alive.

Will could not entirely decide whether or not Hannibal played the role of Jesus or Judas in this scenario.

Like Jesus, Hannibal was the reason they sat together in the remote cabin. Like Jesus, Hannibal was faced with his own demise at the hand of Will Graham. He knew that Will could easily nail him to the cross before Jack Crawford and expose him for the killer he is, yet he set the table with delicately decorated ceramic bowls. He knew Will could kill him, yet he handed a butter knife to Will as opposed to buttering the provided biscuits for him. And despite his knowledge of what was to come, Hannibal remained calm and hospitable towards his potential betrayer.

But to label Hannibal Lecter as the son of god would be to label Will Graham as Judas, and Will Graham would not have that.

He knew that Hannibal was the one to betray him and not the other way around. And despite Hannibal providing the last supper, Will knew that he would be the one displayed before Jack in all his dark beauty. The cross would not be made of wood; it would be made from both love and understanding instead. The nails on his cross would be meaningful— poetic even. His body would be given to Hannibal. It would be used for his twisted art and would be consumed in the privacy and seclusion of his Baltimore home. His blood would be given for Hannibal to drink. Like wine, the crimson of his blood would be paired with a dish worthy of him. Or maybe– just maybe– there would be no dish worthy of Will Graham's blood. Then Hannibal, like Judas, would stare at his remains with regret.

And Will hoped that Hannibal, like Judas, would let the guilt and shame of his work lead him to the gallows.

He hoped that regret hung around Hannibal similarly to the noose of passion he laid at his neck.

If Will Graham were to play the role of Jesus he hoped he would not rise again. No, he would prefer to drag Hannibal down to hell with him instead.

They would be in death as they were in life: Each other's tormentors and destroyers.

However, they were still alive. They were yet to nail each other to the cross and yet to seal their demise. There was still time to end their tango before it led them off a cliff into the cold embrace of death. This supper did not have to be their last.

There would be no more thoughts of the catastrophe between Judas and Jesus. They were their own people and they would find their way out of their last supper without a sacrifice being made.

Hannibal sat across from him at the small table, watching with his usual soft eyes as Will examined the soup. The dish looked rich with nutrients and flavor, but the meat of the dish was unidentifiable.

“Who’s the meat?” Will asked, breaking the silence between them at last.

“He was an ugly chicken named Grutus, who had been carefully preserved in spices to maximize his flavor. The chicken did no good in life, so it shall serve us both well in death. His breast was shredded slowly to keep the tenderness of the meat intact and bathed in broth overnight before taking its rightful place alongside the carrots and potatoes. A complicated chain of events for a simple outcome, but one well worth its time.” Hannibal replied indirectly.

Vladis Grutus was the man within the soup. In Hannibals’ professional opinion, that man did not deserve display; Hannibal’s violent displays were too good for the man. Instead, he was kept hidden and his body never given a coffin to rest in. His body would suffer the same fate as his sister, for he earned the right to know her pain. He would be a meal between unlikely friends just as she was.

Only his death had a more poetic meaning.

He was Hannibal’s beginning, and he would be fed to Hannibal’s end.

“I take it he deserved the soup?” Will commented.

Hannibal did not reply. He almost found it insulting and rude to question the offense of the man. Without words Hannibal told Will to drop the topic. Will saw the glare and immediately understood.

“So..” Will began as he took a spoonful of the soup, trying his best to get as little of Grutus on his spoon as possible, “How did you find me?”

“I had Miss Lounds for dinner.” Hannibal answered as he took a spoonful of Grutus into his mouth.

As he scooped another spoonful he noticed Will’s pale face. He frowned in response as he set down the spoon and the soup within it.

“The dish was vegetarian. Miss Lounds is safe at home. She is most likely salivating over the idea of writing about our dance.” the ripper clarified.

The color returned to Will’s cheeks and he resumed his meal with renewed ease.

“Probably even picking out potential titles already.” Will joked in response.

They both laughed at the idea of Freddie celebrating them.

The laughter was desperately needed between the two men. The dinner was tense and the sound of their voices blending in laughter freed them both from reservations over the other. A small chuckle between them allowed them to restore their friendship, if only for another moment.

Time seemed to freeze at this moment, allowing them to simply exist together. They could be just Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter without the fear that followed. They didn’t have to worry about the hunt that followed or the dance before it. They could allow themselves to be friends in this small cabin hidden from both the world and time. They could be free of both themselves and the expectations that followed. They could do whatever they pleased for just one more day. They could make as many mistakes as they wanted for a few more hours. And if they dared, they could fall in love for the time being.

“I must admit Will, a part of me missed your presence at my table.” Hannibal admitted as he took a few more spoonfuls of soup.

“I missed your cooking.” Will replied.

“Will.” Hannibal said, his tone requesting sincerity for the time being, “by that I meant I missed you.”

Will sighed, “I missed you too.”

“Why don’t we stay here then? You and I could take Abigail Hobbs and create a life together. I don’t want to miss you.” Hannibal asked, desperation clear in his voice.

Will could never say no to those desperate brown eyes. Yet he did not speak. Instead, he shook his head in silent rejection.

“With all due respect Doctor,” Will explained as he set the bowl aside, “Your lifestyle and mine don’t exactly align. And even if they did by some miracle, you haven’t been honest with me. If I can’t trust you how can I know I won’t be put on the menu at the earliest convenience? Isn’t that the reason why you’re here?”

Hannibal would have preferred a knife through the heart to Will Graham’s words. Then again, his words and their truth was meant to jab at him like a blade.

“I’m here because you forced my hand.” Hannibal responded coldly as he stood from the table. He was no longer hungry for the soup or the fight that boiled from it.

“I didn’t *force* anything” Will retorted, anger and frustration growing in his voice, “I left and you *chased* me. You could have let me go. We could have gone our separate ways. We could’ve put this behind us and gone back to a time before—“

Will stopped himself from finishing his thought, but the damage was done.

“Before what Mister Graham?” Hannibal asked, urging him to speak what they both knew Will was planning to say.

“Before the mistake.”

“That’s not what it was and we both know it.”

“It doesn’t matter what it was! It’s over now! That was before you decided to keep a knife in your desk and chase me with it out of your office!” He shouted.

“That was a lapse of judgment.” Hannibal stated, his voice unwavering as he watched Will’s anger as it was unleashed upon him.

“Oh that’s fine then.” Will replied sarcastically, “And I suppose coming here, to a random cabin in the middle of nowhere, in order to finish the job was also a lapse of judgment? How did you even manage to find the cabin? It’s quite literally in the middle of nowhere. I’m interested in hearing your explanation, Doctor.”

“I own it, Will.” was all Hannibal commented on. In honesty, the profiler’s sarcastic and venomous tone was making him question why he ever debated killing Will. He wanted nothing more than to end his rudeness now.

“He owns it!” Will parroted back, “Of course he does! Because we all are just pawns in Hannibal Lecter’s game of chess. We’re all nothing but toys for the Chesapeake Ripper to tear apart piece by piece!”

“Will–....” His voice trailed off. There were no words that could be said to ease the man’s anger.

“Just… shut up. Shut. Up!” Will grunted and stood. With another frustrated groan he left the table and disappeared into the kitchen.

Will Graham had a right to every emotion he felt. It was natural to feel betrayed in this unique situation. Any half-sane person on earth would unleash the same wrath upon him. It

was the only reason he stopped himself from strangling Will as a result of his cruel tone. Will's whole life had been ripped away like a rug under his feet. And just as Will began to finally stand again Hannibal removed the floorboards from beneath him as well. Will's world was in complete shambles and had not had a proper chance to mourn until now. It was entirely understandable that he would explode now, in front of his psychiatrist, at this moment.

Hannibal was left alone with the dish and their untouched biscuits. He left the soup bowls on the table. There was no need to rub salt on the wound by bringing the source of struggle to the kitchen that Will was hiding in. Instead, he gathered the biscuits before he followed Will.

Will watched him enter the room and turned away. He did not want their last night as friends to be one filled with fighting. He wanted to remember the good and not the bad that their friendship ended with.

And when Hannibal walked into his line of vision he knew that he did not want a fight either. They both called for different things tonight, but none of those things were a fight between them.

Hannibal offered the biscuits to Will in silent truce. Will accepted one and took a bite in response.

"You didn't think it was a mistake?" Will questioned, his voice softer but somehow more sure than before.

His voice sounded almost as if a debate in his mind had been settled. Whatever the topic was, he seemed to reach a solution or agreement with himself. Hannibal was unsure of the topic that was debated in the back of Will's broken mind, but he hoped it was over the idea of forgiveness.

"Not in the slightest *mylimasis* " the psychiatrist answered, "did you?"

"I'm not so sure."

“May I suggest,” Doctor Lecter offered, “a slight experiment?”

“Are you trying to flirt with me Doctor?” Will asked, a playful smirk growing on his face.

“Would you reject me if I were to say yes?”

“Not in the slightest.” Will answered as he brought himself closer to Hannibal. As their bodies began to press together Hannibal set aside the remaining biscuits in order to free himself of anything that would come between him and the profiler. As Will’s arms snaked around his waist he couldn’t help but silently praise himself. In a short dinner he managed to trap the fish in his net. And when their lips met Will Graham would be his.

But he was not his yet.

Hunger was often a blinding thing. It was even more blinding when the thing hungered for was at the edge of your lips, only a second away from being tasted.

Hannibal felt Will’s hands on the waistband of his pants, but did not notice the way they searched desperately. He was too fixated on his hands as they took fistfuls of Will’s shirt in longing to notice the anger and focus in Will’s eyes. He breathed in the same air as Will but did not know that air was poisoned.

Hannibal was no longer able to resist temptation. He gave in to sin and crashed his lips into Will’s with passion unlike either of them ever knew. It had been too long since their last mistake. If they were to be anything but enemies, Hannibal wanted to take one more misstep. He wanted to know the taste of Will’s lips once more. He wanted to know the feeling of Will’s body melting into his. He yearned to feel Will grip his hair once more in desperation. He craved it the way addicts craved their addictions.

And he received what he craved, but with some alterations as well.

Will's right hand was slowly pulled away from Hannibal as their lips met. It gripped something that glistened under the kitchen lights but Hannibal was too starved to care. Will's left left hand slid up Hannibal's back and to his neck, pushing Hannibal closer into him. In response Hannibal gripped his left shoulder blade, taking a fistful of his shirt in his hand. His other hand clawed at Will's collarbone in silent begging.

Their first kiss might have been a mistake, but this kiss was nothing short of fate.

Will pulled away from the kiss to catch his breath. Will's hand slid once more as he breathed and found a home between Hannibal's cheek and his neck. He held Hannibal lightly in his left hand as his right hand pointed the glistening blade against Hannibal's stomach. His eyes grew wide in shock as Will pierced him with a look of firm fury on his face. There was a net, but Hannibal was not the one holding it. Instead, he was the one who swam right into Will's trap.

Hannibal tried to push away from his attacker, but the hand on his neck pulled him further into the blade instead. Will watched the blood as it poured from the wound he inflicted upon Hannibal. A slight smile grew on his face at the sight of the predator in shock and fear. That smile grew as Will pulled the blade out of Hannibal and tossed him aside like an old ragdoll.

Hannibal hit the ground with a thud and a groan. As he gripped his stomach he noticed the placement of the wound. The placement was strategic. It was not meant to kill him by any means. Instead, it was meant to slow him down. It was a brilliant strategy, even Hannibal had to admit that even if he was betrayed.

Hannibal began to pull himself off the ground but was met with a kick to the face instead. Another attempt to stand was met with another kick to the face. A third attempt was met with a third kick. A part of Will wanted Hannibal to keep trying so he could keep kicking the man down. Hannibal had done it to him so many times before so it was only fair he did the same in return. That same part of him was disappointed that Hannibal did not move after the third kick. Hannibal was clearly conscious but he did not wish to be tormented further. Almost all the more reason to keep beating the man while he was down. Will wanted to be free of his insanity and Hannibal pushed him farther down the path. Hannibal kicked the sick and scared Will Graham and called it friendship. Hannibal deserved the same treatment in return.

But he could not bring himself to Hannibal's level. He would want that. Hannibal Lecter wanted someone equally depraved at his side. It was the reason he molded Will the way he

did. To keep enacting his wrath upon the Chesapeake Ripper would make Will no better than him.

He could not give Hannibal that satisfaction.

“No. Sit and listen, Doctor.” Will ordered as he backed away toward the door.

Hannibal obeyed the command and remained in the ground gripping the wound to slow the bleeding. He had no other choice in the manner.

“I asked for a game of tag and you gave me chess, so now we’re switching the game. You kill and consume like an animal so now you will chase like an animal. We’re going to play a simple game of hide and seek. You’re welcome to try and kill me in retaliation, but first you’d have to find me. No theatrics, no dinners, just you and me. Catch me if you can, Doctor.”

Will turned to face the front door with the knife still in hand. With a tug he swung the door open to reveal the vast forest to them both. Will looked back at Hannibal as he bled onto the floor, almost tempted to kick him once more for good measure. In Will’s mind, Hannibal Lecter was being let off easy. Hannibal deserved much more suffering than he received.

But despite every urge to deliver the man his rightful karma, he had his life to protect. If he did not leave now he may never have another chance. He turned away from Hannibal Lecter and disappeared once more into the vast forest with only the stolen knife to keep him company.

This time, he would be followed out the door. Will Graham would not escape the Chesapeake Ripper for a third time.

As he left Hannibal clawed his way to his feet. His left hand gripped his stomach for support as he grabbed a new knife from the kitchen and a roll of gauze bandages from the bathroom. He quickly performed first aid on himself; sewing his wound shut and wrapping it with the gauze as fast as he could. When he was satisfied with his work he grabbed the knife he selected from the kitchen and ran out the door after his prey.

And just like that, the chase was on. The game of hide-and-seek had begun.

Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham were much different from Judas and Jesus. They shared a similar insight into their futures and both danced together into death's embrace, but they were different. These modern men were more complex with their betrayals. Theirs ran beyond simple greed or lust for power. Their love for each other ran deeper than mere friendship.

But like Judas and Jesus, their doom was decided the same way. Despite every attempt to weave their story another way, fate had tied a knot at this moment. There was no escaping the chase any more than man could escape death. Their own actions did nothing to help matters either. Though fate had a small hand in their lives, it was they who built this fateful foxtrot brick by brick.

Perhaps in another life they walked away from the cabin with their hands intertwined instead of holding knives. Perhaps as they left they would gaze upon each other with love instead of pure carnal hatred. In another life, neither of them would have to shed a tear or an ounce of blood as tribute to the lives they possessed.

But in this life their hands were tied. They were bound to each other with ropes of romance and braids of betrayal. No, this was their life. It was not the most ideal for either, but it was theirs nonetheless. There was no changing that.

This was how their Greek Tragedy was meant to unfold. This was their fate. This was their demise. This was their design. And like the destruction of Judas and Jesus, it was one that they sealed with a kiss.

The Chase

Chapter Notes

Hi! As always I'm going to disclose now that there are some topics that could be triggering in some way. This is my twist on a classic a03 Hannigram chase, so I want y'all to be aware of what to expect!

The following are going to be displayed during this chapter

-Descriptions of violence
-descriptions of blood
-mentions and descriptions for drugging
-and murder!

Please keep this in mind, and enjoy!

Will fled the cabin with the sun shining directly above him. Now the sun had long since abandoned him like children often abandoned him at recess. He was alone in these woods like he had been in most of his childhood. And like childhood, he felt out of place. He was no animal. He should not be among the owls and the bats in this dark forest. He should be at home, watching the dogs fight for a place beside him on the couch as he drowned himself in case work.

Instead he was stuck on the edge of life and death with nobody but himself to guide him.

There was some comfort in the idea of loneliness. The familiarity of being alone was a welcome sense of stability in this unstable chase. The part of Will that once despised the cruelty of his classmates now found gratitude for the preparation they gave him. Without them he wouldn't work as well as he did when he was alone. The stress of his childhood had prepared him for this moment. They turned his mind into a tool necessary to survive his darkest hour.

He had been on the run for hours. He couldn't rest despite his body screaming in fatigue. To do so would be to surrender himself. He knew his body had long since used its adrenaline to avoid Hannibal's blade and he was now faced with the consequences of escape. He knew the constant movement with no food or water to nourish or replenish himself did not help the matter. With each stride Will felt his feet threatening to give him away by spilling their

crimson blood onto the ground. Will called his own bluff and kept pushing forward. He needed to put as much distance between himself and that wretched cabin as possible. He needed to throw him off his scent. He needed to bore his hunter enough to make him give up the chase. He needed to keep moving to accomplish either of those things.

Hannibal kept close behind but hid himself in the cover of the trees. He made sure to stay hidden as Will ran. He wanted to keep himself out of sight in case Will decided to stop and catch his breath.

Persistence hunting was a beautiful thing, and Hannibal did not mind taking advantage of that beauty like wolves often did. Will was a physically fit man but even he could not run forever. He had to stop eventually. He had to rest, and that's when Hannibal would strike. Or, if the opportunity presented itself, Hannibal would close in and strike him as he ran. Whichever presented itself first would be the method of killing he would use. After all, Hannibal was picky with *who* he killed, not with *how* he killed.

There was something primal stirring in Hannibal as he trailed his prey; something primal that he hadn't seen since his youth. The humanity of Hannibal Lecter had disappeared and was replaced with an apex predator unfamiliar to him. Though he knew this animal when he worked to avenge his sister in another life, he had long since caged this side of him. It was too difficult to return himself to humanity after that beast was unleashed. Yet here Hannibal was with that horrid side of him in control. Maybe Hannibal hoped to not see civilized society past tonight. After all, a world in which there was no Will Graham was not a world worth living in.

As Will ran he could feel his head pounding and his heart beating out of his chest. He didn't have a set destination but he knew that if he didn't find somewhere safe he would soon collapse. His body felt heavier with every step. His lungs left him gasping for air. Will Graham was on borrowed time now.

As Will weaved through the forest he glanced back behind him. He hoped that despite the darkness he would be able to see how far away he was from Hannibal if the man was still on his tail. He could not see farther than a few feet behind him, which did not soothe his anxiety. Slightly disappointed and even more scared, Will carried on.

The soles of his shoes were tearing under the pressure. They slowly were peeling away, hindering Will. They were infuriating to deal with but Will kept them under the belief that

they still protected his feet from the uncertainty of the ground he ran upon. However, they often caught on tree branches or would fold in on itself with a single misstep. Out of frustration, Will at one point made an attempt to rip them off as he ran. What was a jog became a hop as Will tried to rip his shoes from his feet with no avail. After an attempt or two he gave up. There were more important matters than his shoes. He needed to preserve his energy and not waste it on something as inconsequential as his shoes.

Will slowed his pace against the protest in his mind. His mind begged his body to move but his body could not obey. It was too tired. It was too drained. His body was screaming for rest but his mind was trying to urge him on. Will had no choice but to accept the slower pace and push on. What was a scurry became a stroll out of pure exhaustion. If Hannibal was on his tail it was a matter of time before he caved into that exhaustion and gave himself away to him as a result.

Will turned to see behind him again. He did not see Hannibal but saw the shape of the stag behind him. He wasn't sure if it was exhaustion or the darkness that caused the hallucination, but he saw it nonetheless. He blinked quickly in an attempt to make it disappear. The stag disappeared but a glimpse of Hannibal appeared in its place.

Will tried to pick up the pace to no avail. Hannibal grew closer and he knew it. The end of the chase was at hand. Will's life would be over soon.

Or perhaps not.

The indomitable human spirit was a confusing thing. It always seemed to play a role when it's least expected. The human need to survive had a tendency to outweigh all the odds stacked against them. With fatigue, broken limbs, or blood loss, the human body would always seem to push through it solely for the chance at survival. It was like reconnecting with the uncivilized human nature; a side of humanity that had long since been abandoned.

Will suddenly felt it now, as the predator drew near.

Hannibal was close, and his body mustered the last of its adrenaline to break into a sprint. He refused to be dinner. He refused to take his last breaths with Hannibal looming over him. He refused to hear the man speak sweet nothings as he wiped the blood from the blade. He wanted to see his pack again. He wanted to be free from fear and truly live.

He stopped in his tracks at the thought. In order to be free, he had to rid himself of the man chasing him. And to do so, he had to handle him head on.

Will turned to face the man with the stolen knife in hand. Hannibal stood before him. They stared at each other, waiting for the other to strike. Will watched Hannibal's eyes as he waited. The darkness of his eyes screamed of blood-thirst. He could see that Hannibal ached to watch his crimson spill from him like a fountain of holy water at the foot of an altar. He burned for the smell of it pooling around his corpse. Will knew it. Hannibal most likely knew it too. So why did he stand still? What was stopping him? Will didn't wait to ask. Instead, he saw opportunity.

Will charged at the man in front of him, the knife held at his side. Hannibal raised his own in response. Just as Will got close enough to see the blue of Hannibal's irises, he launched the knife into Hannibal's thigh. It pierced him between the Abductor Longus and the Sartorius muscles. Hannibal grunted in pain but kept the knife in his thigh. In response Hannibal swiped the blade across Will's chest. Will roared with pain as he held the wound. As Will cried out in pain Hannibal ripped the knife from his thigh and stabbed Will in the side. Will grunted and tried to push Hannibal away from him to no avail. Instead, Hannibal took the kitchen knife and stabbed Will just below his left collarbone. As Will grunted again he punched Hannibal in the stomach exactly where Will stabbed him earlier. Hannibal instinctively dropped the knife Will stabbed him and gripped his stomach. In response Will picked up the drop knife.

Will, panting and dripping with blood, waited for Hannibal to attack again. Hannibal did the same. They both watched with eyes on each other as they caught their breath and allowed the crimson to pour from their broken and exhausted bodies.

"C'mon Hannibal. You're 'it'" Will shouted at him between gasps for air.

Hannibal waited a moment and then obeyed, charging at him with the bloody blade in hand. Will in response kicked him in the stomach. Hannibal fell onto his back and left Will looming over him.

Will straddled Hannibal between his legs, locking Hannibal beneath him. He pressed the blade to Hannibal's neck with a readiness to kill.

His death is close enough to smell now. With Hannibal's blood spilled Will could finally be free. He could go home. He could see his dogs again. He could rekindle the few fragile friendships he had. He could finally have a life again. And if he dared, Will could be happy. Yet despite it all, he could not bring himself to slit his throat. Though he was desperate to be free of him, he couldn't help but stop himself. He had killed before, yet he couldn't bring himself to kill Hannibal Lecter.

Will pushed his head closer to Hannibal, their lips only a breath away from each other. They gasped as they desperately took in each other's air and the copper of their blood. Will watched as Hannibal's lips took him in, an urge to kiss them growing present in the back of his mind.

No, he couldn't. They both were bloody from each other's blades. They couldn't now. They were enemies. From the moment Will left the cabin all hopes at finding belonging with Hannibal was gone.

Will couldn't kiss him and definitely couldn't kill him, so what could he do? The answer was simple: he could at least slow him down.

Will took both his hands and held Hannibal's head within them. The kiss felt imminent now, but he couldn't give in. Instead, Will gripped Hannibal and slammed his head repeatedly into the ground until his body went limp. The force wasn't enough to kill (but Will wished it was), but it was enough to keep Hannibal from following for a short while.

As soon as his body was limp, Will stood and turned away. And under the cover of night, Will continued on and away from the unconscious body.

A small light flickered in front of Will as he jogged through the forest. The light grew slowly into something wider and brighter– like a campfire. Oh, how badly Will wished it was a campfire. Then again, the people at that campfire were at risk. They were in the woods with a killer and a desperate man. Their lives were doomed. Will needed the rest, but he didn't want to risk anyone he didn't have to.

Yet despite the conflict whirling through his mind he forced himself into a dash towards the heat of the flame.

As he raced toward the flame his mind compromised with his body. If there were women or children by the fire he would turn himself away. No woman or child deserved an encounter with the Chesapeake Ripper. If the campfire was his fellow man then he would risk them. If a man was camping in the woods then perhaps he had a gun Will could borrow. With one shot to the head it would all be over. Will would be free. Just as it began, his dance with Hannibal would end in gunfire. It was a bittersweet thought, but Will would be lying to himself if he didn't consider it his best option.

As Will got closer he could see one tent that was meant to fit two. He saw a person with a masculine physique but long hair tending to the flames with his hair flowing in the light breeze of night. Will saw no other people by the fire, so he chose to approach.

He felt as if Hannibal was still close behind him, but he felt as if he stopped in his tracks as he met the man at the massive campfire. He couldn't follow Will to the flame. To do so would be to give himself away and risk his own life. He was starved for Will, but not desperate yet. He would wait until the right moment. For now, he would wait and observe.

"Uhm…. hi?" Will breathed as he brought himself to a halt next to the fire.

The person turned to him, startled by the voice.

"Hello? What are you doing out here all alone? Are you alright?" they asked as they reached for the gun at their holster. They did not take it out, but gripped it tightly. It was understandable considering the circumstances.

"I'm…. in danger…. Being… chased.." was all Will could answer before he collapsed in front of the man.

—----------

Will fluttered his eyes open slowly and found himself inside a small tent. He could feel the air mattress as it wobbled beneath him with each confused breath he took. He sat up with a

grunt and looked around the room. All he could see was the forest green color of the tent, a battery powered lamp beside him, and a slightly cracked open entrance to the tent.

Will had too many questions and not enough answers.

And seemingly on command, the man emerged with a cup of water and a few slices of bread. He handed the water to Will and set the bread on his lap. The man then sat by the lamp on the floor and watched Will.

Will examined the glass of water, his eyes locked on the ice cubes at the bottom of the glass. He was in no position to question the man or be rude in any way, so he drank the water. It tasted odd and almost bitter, but Will did not comment on it. He was too thirsty to care.

“How long have I been here?” Will asked as he passed the glass back to the man.

“About an hour. It’s about four now. I’ve been trying to patch you up since you knocked out.” the man answered as he took the glass and set it down beside himself like keeping it would make him guilty, “You mentioned being in danger. What’s chasing you?”

“An old friend.”

The man raised a brow in confusion more prominent than before. He chose not to ask and held out his right hand to Will.

“I’m Halir.” the man stated.

“Like Halirrhothios, the son of Poseidon?” Will asked.

“Uhm. Sure. Whatever helps you remember better.”

“I’m Will.” he replied as he shook the man’s hand.

“I like your name better. Much more simple.”

Will laughed lightly in response but found his head pounding as a result. After a moment he regained his sense of stability and stood. He made his way out of the tent and back into the heat of the fire. Halir followed close behind and mirrored his actions.

His body still ached for rest. The hour Halir had provided was not enough. Will still needed to nourish his body but would not take anymore from the stranger. To do so would be rude.

“Listen Halir” Will began as he stared at the fire, “I appreciate what you did for me but I can’t stay. Every minute here puts you at risk. I hope you understand.”

Just as Will spoke he began to feel a sense of dizziness. He turned away from the fire and dragged himself to a nearby tree for support.

What was happening?

“No, stay a bit.” Halir answered as he followed Will to the tree with a smug smirk on his face. He placed a hand in his hair and forced Will to look him in the eye. Will in response sent his fist into the man’s face and then fell back into the tree for support once more.

The man stumbled back a moment, but recovered uncomfortably quickly.

“Stay the fuck away from me.” Will spat, fury present in both his tone and his eyes.

Halir disobeyed and took a step forward. In response a hand grabbed Halir by the neck from behind and pulled him away from Will.

“He said stay away. You should listen.” the man gripping Halir said calmly as he pressed a sharp kitchen knife to his neck.

“Hannibal.” Will breathlessly called out as he took a step away from the tree and toward him, “Don’t hurt him.”

“Y-yeah Hannibal. D-don’t hurt me!” the man stuttered as he tried to break free of Hannibal’s iron grasp.

As Will took another step towards the men he watched two more identical images sprout from the one he faced. His vision was betraying him but he had to move forward. He faced the image to the right and pointed the stolen knife at him.

“I said let him go!” he shouted.

Hannibal watched as Will pointed the knife nowhere near him and then looked at Halir. His expression remained calm as he quickly put the pieces together.

He took the knife away from his neck and stabbed it into his ankle instead to prevent him from escaping. Once the man lost all balance and stability in his leg Hannibal dropped him onto the ground. He quickly made his way to Will and carefully took the knife from his hand. He put it back in its rightful sheath at his own side and then guided Will back to the tree.

“Mylimasis, this does not concern you. Rest.” Hannibal ordered as he gently sat Will down against the tree.

He then returned his attention to Halir, who had begun to claw away. He didn’t make it far. Hannibal walked over to him and grabbed him by the hair. He dragged him by his long locks over to the fire and held his face above it.

“You drugged him. I want to know why and how.” Hannibal commanded, his voice cold and his mind firm on his intentions.

“Roofie. Put it in his drink.” Halir answered quickly and nervously, his face sweating over the heat of the flame.

“You didn’t say why.”

“He had stab wounds! I was trying to numb the pain!” Halir screamed as he flailed against the heat of the flames.

“A benzodiazepine is a hypnotic drug not a painkiller. Try again.”

“Have you seen him? I thought it was obvious. He’d make lovely art.”

Hannibal’s blood boiled upon hearing those words. There were no words in any language that were able to properly express his anger towards Halir. Hannibal initially planned to have him for dinner after he received his answers. Now, Hannibal did not see him worthy of the honor. No, he would simply suffer.

“He is quite beautiful,” Hannibal agreed as he looked over at Will.

The man against the tree was a sweaty and delirious mess. He held his open palm out and used his other hand to count his own fingers. Hannibal could hear him say fifteen at one point as he counted his one hand, which angered Hannibal even more.

“But he’s mine.” Hannibal continued as he threw Halir into the flames, “And I don’t appreciate you drugging what's mine.”

Hannibal did not watch the man as his hair and clothes set him ablaze. The man was too insignificant to him. Instead, he made his way over to the tree that Will sat against.

He stood at the man's feet, looking over him. Will had not registered him yet; he was too lost in the drug to notice most of anything.

Hannibal took the hunting knife from its sheath and held it in his hand. He stared at Will as he sat vulnerable before him. It would be so easy to kill him now. It would be quick and painless. Will would never have to understand the weight of his own death. They both would finally be free of each other. Hannibal could finally have his life restored. It was that easy, all he had to do was slit Will's gorgeous neck.

"Are you going to kill me now?" Will asked as his dismayed eyes met Hannibal's.

"I have to Will. You understand that as well as I."

"No, you don't. Stay with me." He pleaded as he held out a hand for Hannibal, or at least tried to.

Hannibal looked at Will, trying to muster up the strength to do what must be done. One clean cut. One slit. One swift motion and it was all over. Yet for some reason he couldn't do it, he couldn't bring himself to embrace the end of Will Graham.

No, his love ran too deep for murder.

Hannibal dropped the knife and sank to his knees before Will, his heart heavy with disgust and regret. He looked at Will nd then at his own hands that were coated in the man's blood. The beast had been thrown back into the cage and logic was restored. He almost killed the one person he loved.

He put his hands together as if he was praying to Will, because in a way he was. In silence he prayed for his forgiveness.

"Where else would I go?" Hannibal answered, still not facing Will.

Will held a shaky hand out over his praying hands and another out towards his face. He couldn't think or understand much, but he did understand a need to feel Hannibal's embrace as his world was being shattered around him. He needed Hannibal.

Hannibal saw Will's hands and wearily accepted. He took Will's hand in both of his own and pulled himself closer to Will. Will gladly accepted him, pulling Hannibal in and placing his head on Will's chest. He kept his one hand in Hannibal's and wrapped the other around his waist to keep them close. Feeling the weight of Hannibal against him as he took each breath was a grounding thing. He could feel his disorganized and confused mind as it seemed to slot everything into place. Hannibal, despite all odds, had become a sense of stability. Without him, Will would descend into chaos.

And oddly enough, Hannibal felt the same way.

Hannibal fought back tears as he stayed enveloped in Will's arms. Too much time had passed without truth between them. Hannibal lied to Will about what he was. Will lied about what their dance really was. Hannibal lied again about killing Will. There were too many lies and too much deceit in their relationship, but tonight that changed. Tonight, under the smell of burning flesh and the light of the now rising sun, they finally saw all. They did not feel the duty that drove them, the moral codes they stood besides, or the blood on their hands. It was just Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter now.

"I'm sorry Will." Hannibal whispered as the tears finally won the battle.

"Shut up. You called me beautiful, you're forgiven." Will joked as he held Hannibal closer.

"You heard that?"

"Don't worry, I didn't hear anything else."

Hannibal let out a light laugh through his tears in response.

“Would you like to go back to the cabin for a night?”

“Depends, are you going to chase me out again?” Will jokingly asked.

“Not unless you stab me.” Hannibal replied.

“Then yes, I could use a proper bed and a warm meal.”

Hannibal in response looked at the burning man. He considered turning him into a dish so Will could have a proper meal, but the man was too charred and dead now for such a kindness.

Hannibal turned back to Will and smiled. It was light and weak, but it was one of joy. At least Will thought it was.

No other words were spoken between the men. Instead, Hannibal used the embrace to scoop the drugged Will Graham into his arms and lift him off the ground. Will held onto his neck for support. Then, as if his body had conserved its strength for this moment, he started carrying Will away from the crime scene and towards the small cabin where the chase began.

A Proposal

Chapter Notes

As always I'm going to give a slight trigger warning!

The following will be mentioned/hinted at

-being drugged
-Cannibalism
-brainwashing
-mental manipulation

“Stay with me”

The words of a man too drugged to know his own man should not have as much influence as they did, but yet Hannibal allowed Will to tighten the noose of love around him with it.

“Stay with me”

The words echoed in Hannibal’s mind as he carried Will the whole way back to the cabin. The deaths of the rude along with their unnatural displays made carrying him easy, and the leftover adrenaline from the chase also added to that aid.

“Stay with me”

The words chimed like wedding bells as he carried Will back into the cabin the way a husband carries their bride into their home.

“Stay with me”

The words lingered like the kiss they shared in a time that felt so long ago now.

“Stay with me”

The warmth of the words clung to him like the heat of Will’s body after he had been peeled from Hannibal and laid on the only bed in the cabin.

“Stay with me”

The words flowing through the room as Hannibal turned to leave Will in the room with nothing but the comfort of the bedsheets.

“Stay with me.” Will whined as Hannibal went to shut the door behind him.

And like promised, he would go nowhere else.

Hannibal, despite wanting time alone to process the recent events involving Will, answered his call and returned to the room in which the words were flowing. He swiftly made his way across the room and to the bed. He sat at its foot out of respect for Will. He would not get too close tonight. The man needed time and rest before they talked about anything of importance. For the time being, they would simply enjoy the newfound peace that came with their shared company.

“I can’t feel you. Come closer.” Will moaned as he threw his hand against the empty space on the bed beside him. Hannibal looked at him with a sense of uncertainty, but Will repeated the action over and over until Hannibal was certain. Hannibal slowly and cautiously crawled his way over to the space beside Will and laid on his back beside the man. Hannibal let out a light sigh of relief as he felt the softness of the mattress against him like a cloud enveloping him. He turned his head to gaze upon Will but was met with his dilated eyes on Hannibal instead.

Will ran his left hand along the space between the two men in search of Hannibal's. It took him a long moment but when Will found his hand he gripped it as if he was afraid of separation. Hannibal had never seen a man so desperate for anyone, let alone him. It was a comforting feeling; to be wanted. It was both an electrifying and calming feeling simultaneously. It was a shame that feeling would never be given without the influence of drugs.

Hannibal would give everything for Will Graham. If Will asked, he would consider taking meat off the menu. If Will begged hard enough, Hannibal would walk with a smile on his face towards a cell with no window view. Hannibal would kill for Will again without him having to ask. The brunette man could have anything Hannibal could give with a small "please". Like Halir, Hannibal would burn anyone or anything to see Will smile back at him. Hannibal, like Achilles, would burn the world to the ground in order to see Will as the king of the ashes. Hannibal would bend the knee and devote his life to Will in the same way many other cursed men devote themselves to other wrathful gods.

"I don't think I've ever been in love like this." Will mentioned, which snapped Hannibal out of his thoughts.

"Define 'like this'" Hannibal asked as he kept his eyes on Will.

"I– I don't know how to explain it," Will began, "I guess I have never been in love in a way this pure?"

"We are not pure Will."

"I said I didn't know Hannibal."

Hannibal smiled slightly, "Perhaps you mean you haven't loved another man before."

"Could be it," Will replied, "But this— this feels more whole. Does that make more sense?"

"It does."

Will slid himself closer to Hannibal, closing the small gap between them. Will pulled Hannibal's hand onto his chest. Hannibal debated keeping Will's dignity and personal space, but he could not seem to pull away. Instead, Hannibal could feel Will as his chest rose and fell with every breath he took. His heart felt much closer now. He could almost feel the beats of his heart spelling out his name in yearning like Hannibal's had since they met. They laid side by side and shoulder to shoulder as they enjoyed a simple conversation for the first time in what felt like eternity.

"Hannibal, I have a confession to make."

"I'm listening."

"I think I'm in love with you." Will blurted, which was followed by a light giggle, "Wow. It felt good to get that out finally."

Hannibal's heart skipped a beat as the words escaped Will's soft lips. Will Graham, the object of all his desires, wanted him in return. He ached and burned for Hannibal. He finally admitted it after so much time spent dancing around their truth. He couldn't deny Hannibal anymore.

Then again, the man was still high.

"You won't in the morning." Hannibal coldly replied as he turned away from Will to face the ceiling.

Will groaned in annoyance, "yes I would. If I didn't you'd be dead."

"Fair point, but I still firmly believe you won't be as vocal about it in the morning." Hannibal replied.

“Oh shut up and kiss me.” Will grunted as he took his other hand and gently nudged Hannibal’s face back towards him.

Though Hannibal struggled to understand Will with his slurred words, two stuck out. “ *Kiss me”* he had said. Will Graham wanted to kiss him with no other intent hidden behind it. Will offered him a kiss and nothing more. The kiss would have no other meaning. It wouldn’t be a desperate grasp at reality. It wouldn’t be a distraction for Will’s violent retaliations. It would simply be a kiss and nothing more.

Hannibal ached to taste Will’s lips again. Will, despite the bitterness of his personality, tasted sweet. He tasted like a coffee with cream and sugar mixed in. The bitterness of the coffee was hidden behind the sweetness of his touch. As Hannibal took him in he often felt more energized. And like caffeine, Will was addicting. Functioning became quite difficult without him.

But no, he would have to hold himself back. It would pain him to resist, but he had to. Neither of them were in the right mindset for a kiss that would damn them more than they already were. Will was too high and Hannibal was too concerned for Will to distract himself with such divine things.

“No.” Hannibal replied with a tang of sadness evident in his tone.

“Why not?” Will asked as he pulled their foreheads together.

“You were drugged with benzodiazepine earlier. You aren’t in the right mindset to have me in this room let alone to demand a kiss.” Hannibal explained as a single tear escaped and slid down towards the pillow his head rested on.

“Please.” Will begged, his hand sliding onto Hannibal’s cheek to wipe away the tear.

“No Will. My love for you will forever run deeper than any grave we dig for ourselves. You are the only thing I ever desired since the moment we met. I would set myself ablaze if it meant I could warm you on a winter’s night. I’d betray everything I’ve ever known and every moral code I abide by if it meant there was a chance to see you happy. I would give you

anything you desire, but not tonight. It has been a long journey to this moment and it has not been one of joy. We both have scars to attest for the strain we put onto each other and ourselves. Our bodies as well as our minds cannot handle the consequences that will blossom from a kiss You especially couldn't since you are still high. I am a starved man whose hunger can only be satisfied with your presence, but I am not starved enough to compromise you more than you already are. You have been robbed of many things, but you will not be robbed of your dignity too Mister Graham."

Will made a pouting face in response, his eyes clearly voicing his protest.

"Ask again in the morning and perhaps I'll agree to a kiss. For now, please rest mylimasis."

Will went to protest, but as he opened his mouth Hannibal pressed a finger to his lips. Will understood that the conversation was over. He simply closed his eyes and slept in hopes the morning would come quickly. As a silent thanks Hannibal compromised with the drugged man and pressed a light kiss upon the hand still intertwined with his own.

Hannibal turned his head back to the ceiling and finally allowed his thoughts to race. He was here in the bed beside Will. They didn't have to run or chase anymore. They no longer feared the other or the possible outcomes of their closeness. He admitted he loved Hannibal in return. The stars seemed in this moment as if they were finally aligning.

Yet Hannibal shed more tears.

He did not cry out of pain from the past or joy from the present. Instead he mourned the future. Hannibal knew that this moment, as peaceful as it was, would not remain their reality. They could not kill each other. They couldn't put themselves or each other out of their misery with death. Instead they both chose to suffer as they both lived. Peace would not remain with them as a result. When they both woke again they would have to face reality. They danced their way to the line, now they had to decide if they could cross it knowing they could never turn back.

But as ancient latin subscript said, ubi amor ibi dolor. To love is to feel pain. And as Hannibal thought of their future while sleep tightened their grip on him, he knew that the pain he felt was proof that Hannibal's love could not be so easily doused.

—----------

Will could feel the pounding of his head as his eyes fluttered open and into awareness. As he sat up slowly on the bed he couldn't help but notice the warmth on the other side of the bed. It reeked of blood and cologne, like someone had slept in the bed with Will. Whoever it was had disappeared recently. Will looked around the room for any hints of who was in the room with him but instead noticed a white button up shirt and dress pants on a chair in front of him. He looked down at his own clothes and noticed both the blood stains and the smell of burning flesh on it.

Will slowly rose from the bed and changed into the fresh clothes. The pants were slightly loose and the shirt felt slightly too wide for his build. The clothes he wore were clearly not his own, but Will did not complain. Any clothes were better than what he was wearing.

After he changed Will looked around the room for indicators of how he got back into the cabin. He had no memory of it and every time he tried to think back his mind greeted him with a pounding headache. Eventually he gave up and casually limped his way out of the bedroom and into the kitchen.

As Will emerged in the kitchen he found Hannibal calmly slicing away at what looked like a chicken while wearing a black dress shirt that also lacked blood stains. Spices were set on the counter next to bowls of diced vegetables. Hannibal was clearly lost in his craft and didn't notice Will as he sat down at the first chair he could find. Will watched him as he worked with nothing but confusion on his face. How was Hannibal here? Why were they not actively trying to kill each other?

"Good morning Will. How are you feeling?" Hannibal asked as he finally looked away from the dish and met Will's gaze. Will watched as Hannibal's eyes flashed downwards and back up to meet his again. He smirked at Will, "I see you found my clothes that I left out for you."

"Of course they're yours." Will muttered. He sighed as he leaned back in the chair, "I feel like shit. Care to explain yourself?"

“You sought refuge with a man who patched your wounds and then drugged you. I took you back here. You begged me to stay with you and I did the whole night. Then I woke, set clothes out for you, checked on my own wounds, and then began breakfast. Is that suitable for you Will?”

“And the man?”

“He was burning long before he reached the gates of hell.” Hannibal replied as he tried to hide a smile at the thought.

“So you took care of him then.” Will reiterated as he got out of his chair and pulled it to the counter. Will then sat himself back in the chair as he was.

“Yes, now do you want eggs with chicken or would you just like the eggs?” Hannibal asked as he flipped an egg.

“Depends. Is it really chicken?”

“Grutus was only brought in the lukewarm bowls that are now in the sink and Halir was too burnt to harvest from.”

“Of course.” Will replied sarcastically, “makes total sense. I’ll take chicken then.”

Hannibal smiled as he carefully looked at the spices he laid out for himself: he picked the third one from the left and sprinkled it into a sizzling pan of butter and olive oil. The sliced chicken was then laid out in the bowl where they would slowly be cooked.

“I think maybe a proper discussion is long overdue between us. A real conversation, not what happened the day before.” Hannibal suggested as he flipped the sliced chicken to properly cook both sides.

“I think so too. We certainly need to talk about the killer in the room.”

“Please never call it that again Will.”

“Oh cmon! That was a good one admit it! The play on-…. Never mind.”

The two men sat in silence as Hannibal finished his cooking. Hannibal watched the food with a sense of attention that Will had only ever seen with him. Will watched Hannibal with that same attention, taking him in as he worked. Within moments the chicken had been slid onto their plates and were accompanied by eggs and bacon. Hannibal lifted the two plates and carried them to the table and Will grabbed the silverware from a drawer in the kitchen. They both set down what laid in their hands and took a proper seat at the table. Will sat at the head and Hannibal sat on his right like wives often did at dinner parties in ancient societies.

Despite his hunger and the appeal of the food, Will could not eat. There was no anticipation of death between them. There was no threats. There was no lingering regrets between them, yet Will could not eat.

“So,” Will paused for a moment to decide how he would word his next sentence, “about the elephant in the room..”

“What about it?”

“Well, what exactly do we do now?”

“I still don’t follow.”

“Hannibal stop playing stupid. We both know what I’m talking about.”

“Oh, I see. What do you suggest then?”

“I don’t know. Killing each other clearly isn’t an option anymore.”

“You’re faced with either turning me in or joining me. May I offer a third option?” Hannibal asked between bites of his food.

“Depends. What’s the third option?”

“I could blind you. I’ve done it before.” Hannibal offered as he took a sip of his water.

“Like what? Like rip my corneas out? Seems a bit extreme.” Will combated

“No, mental blindness. Consider it to be glorified brainwashing. I would take memories from your mind and make them beyond recollection.” Hannibal explained.

“And you’ve done this before?” Will asked with confusion evident on his face.

“A few times actually,” the neater man answered, “You only remember one kiss in my office but there had been several. I also brought you here and only kept the destination in your mind.”

“Of course” Will sighed, “new rule: full honesty from here on out. No brainwashing, no knives in desks, and certainly no more houses in the woods that you secretly own.”

“Understood.”

“Great. Now, without brainwashing, what do we do about you Hannibal?”

“I’m not a child who broke a glass, don’t speak of me as if I am.” Hannibal calmly commented as he took another bite of his breakfast.

“I’m being serious Hannibal.” Will barked back.

“Šis gražus vyras bus mano mirtis” Hannibal muttered as he set down the silverware in order to hold his head in his hands, “Do you remember last night?”

“Not in the slightest.”

“Last night, while we were in bed, you tried to convince me to kiss you again.” Hannibal explained as his right hand dragged down his face and laid back on the table.

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” Will groaned as he threw down his silverware and took sudden interest in the ceiling, “I hate you so much. You are the bane of my existence.”

“You also told me that you believed yourself to be in love with me. We had a lengthy discussion about how our love feels for you as well, so I doubt hate is what you feel.”

“Just amazing!” Will laughed in anger as he threw his hands into the air, “Now why tell me this? How is *any* of this relevant Doctor?”

“Was it true?” Hannibal asked with his voice softer and his voice more plain.

“I’m asking the questions here.” Will snapped as he lowered his head to finally look at Hannibal again.

“Answer mine and I’ll answer yours. Quid Pro Quo.” Hannibal quickly retaliated.

“Fine.”

The two men sat in silence for a moment, breathing in the tension between them. Will ripped himself away from Hannibal and into his mind. Did Will love Hannibal? Will had been in love before, or at least he thought he had. The way he felt towards those women in his life were drastically different than what he felt with Hannibal. The man's presence had the ability to energize him like morning espresso or calm him like a warm midnight tea. No matter what came between them, Will often found comfort in the warmth of Hannibal's arms. He felt like a cozy fireplace and a blanket in winter or ice cold water in the blazing summer. He didn't realize how much he needed him until he had the man in his grasp. Every interaction was a struggle to keep himself from repeating their past mistake or to melt into the man. Being beside him made Will feel more alive than he ever felt. It was almost as if he was never truly born until Hannibal's loving gaze hatched his shell. He'd only been existing before Hannibal, but now he was truly living.

Was that what it felt like to be in love with someone?

"No– yes– I mean maybe– I don't know. I don't know Hannibal." he answered at last, "I know I can't kill you so that counts for something though right?"

"Do you think you could learn to?"

"Hannibal, Quid Pro Quo. I gave, now it's your turn. How is this relevant?"

"Would you be open to marriage?"

"To who? You?" Will asked.

"That was the plan, yes." Hannibal answered

"Why?"

“No Will, Quid Pro Quo. You answer my question. Could you learn to love me?”

“I think so. Again, I don’t know. Why?”

“Married couples cannot be forced to testify against each other in a court of law. By marrying me, we will never have to worry about betrayal again.” Hannibal explained with his voice still soft. It almost felt as though he was afraid that any other tone would shatter them both like a teacup.

“You’d give up the rest of your life for my sake?” Will asked as his eyes began to water.

“I wouldn’t be giving up a thing. I’d do it with pleasure. Would you?” Hannibal replied. Will couldn’t help but notice a meaning within those words, but he wasn’t entirely sure of them yet.

“I don’t know Hannibal. I don’t think I’d want to take that from you. ”

“You wouldn’t be in the slightest, If anything I’d be the one taking it from you.” Hannibal rationalized as he stood and placed his silverware on his plate.

He carefully collected Will’s plate as well before he disappeared into the kitchen for a moment. He emerged again while holding what looked like a small black box in his left hand. Hannibak swiftly dropped himself onto one knee before Will. He opened the box to reveal a gorgeous ring carefully displayed.

The ring resembled the wooden bark of the trees the cabin was surrounded by. On either end of the ring there was a simple blackened silver lining.

The wooden design was meant to represent Will. The bark design on the ring was meant to pay homage to Will’s roots in Wolf Trap and his present moment in this cabin. Will, as proven by their recent endeavors, was deeply connected with the world around him. The wood was made to be Will.

The blackened silver held multiple meanings. The elegance and beauty of the blackened silver represented Hannibal himself. Though he loved his gaudy and lavish lifestyle, he always had an appreciation for the beauty of the simple. The placement of the blackened silver on either side of the wooden design represented the idea that Hannibal would hold Will close no matter the circumstances. Even with a knife to his neck he would embrace Will Graham. The pitch black color of the silver represented the skeletons and demons that brought them to this moment. Without them there would be no rings for them to share.

“I know we are not perfect Will. By any standard we will forever be the outcasts and outliers of our world. There will always be the chance that we do not have a home in their world. We could change everything and still not be welcome among the masses, but you are not unwanted. There is always a home waiting for you here. There will always be a place for you beside me. I could be the stability in the raging storm of your life. You would never need a mask to wear with me. It may not feel like it, but you will always be loved despite whatever path you choose to follow. Allow me to love you. Allow me to take your hand as the chaos of our worlds burns our lives to the ground. Allow me to dance with you through the ashes. You don’t have to feel the same infatuation or devotion that I’ve learned to have for you, but I do ask that you consider the idea of a promise to stay with me as I have with you.”

“Hannibal I….” Will’s voice trailed off.

“Please, stay with me.” Hannibal begged as he fought back what Will thought were tears.

“Where else would I go?” Will replied as he shut the box with the ring still inside.

Hannibal watched the box as it closed and then looked to Will with confusion.

“Not yet. Let me learn to love as you have before we jump to marriage.” Will stated as he leaned closer to Hannibal.

Hannibal dropped his other knee and leaned in like a starved man faced with an apple dangling in front of him. Will gently cupped Hannibal’s face in one of his hands as the man gazed up at him. If they lived in any other time, this moment would’ve been labeled as a lowly man being met with equal love by their god. They’d be painted. Their love would be

hung in a museum next to the Mona Lisa or the Primavera. But for their more modern time, they would simply settle for the art of the moment they shared.

Then again, kissing Will Graham wasn't exactly settling.

Slowly, as if they both feared the other would dissolve before them, their lips met. This kiss was softer than any that they shared before, and equally more tender. They normally crashed together like waves, but today they kissed like a wave lightly caressing the shore. Their lives had always been intense, but the faintness of their kiss showed that despite the chaos the two men would always have tenderness of their love.

After a moment Hannibal gently nudged Will in his seat without breaking their lips away. Will understood the silent request and joined him on the ground without ever pulling away from the man. He would never pull away again. He would never run. He'd follow that man through hell if it meant he could hold his hand through the flames. Whether that was love or dependency; Will wasn't sure. All he knew is he would never turn from Hannibal again.

Hannibal slid an arm around Will's waist and laid himself on his back against the cold floor. Will pulled himself on top of him out of a desperate need to keep Hannibal on his lips.

"How do you feel about the Baltimore State Hospital?" Hannibal breathed as he pulled away from the kiss.

"I hear it's beautiful this time of year." Will answered sarcastically as he slowly and shakily unbuttoned Hannibal's shirt and then his own, "but Hannibal, please shut up you're ruining the moment."

As Will pulled Hannibal back into the kiss it became more passionate. Like Hannibal was starved, Will didn't notice he thirsted for Hannibal until this moment. Hannibal felt like a lake in the middle of the Sahara desert; so rare yet so beautiful. He never wanted to leave the lake again and venture further into the sands. Perhaps that meant he did in fact love him.

Either way, this moment was theirs and theirs alone. The tides of their love had changed and they were finally free to swim into each other. The world was theirs now, and they held it in

their arms.

The Power of Paper

Bedelia Du Maurier loved wine. She loved wine so much that she often considered it to be the love of her life. It didn't lie, it didn't steal, and it certainly didn't kill. That was a rare thing in her life. Though she knew it was concerning, she often kept two glasses and a bottle of white wine unopened but on hand for any occasion. However, when Hannibal Lecter visited her for their therapy sessions, the bottle was almost always half gone by the time he arrived. She needed every ounce of liquid courage that the bottle could give her, especially after being a witness of what he was capable of.

She sat across from him on her small couch as she poured yet another glass for both herself and Hannibal. The man happily accepted and they both lightly clinked their glasses together in silent toast. To what they were toasting, Bedelia was unsure. There was never any knowing for sure when it came to Hannibal Lecter.

"Are we going to be talking about you or your relationship with Will Graham today?" Bedelia asked as she set down her wine in order to grab a black pen to compliment the notebook on her lap.

"Both." Hannibal responded as he began to relax in his unique way against the chair.

"In that case, you have the floor doctor." She stated as she glanced down at the notebook. She flipped to a blank page and clicked the pen so the point emerged through the pen. She wrote something small and quickly as if it was a minor detail.

"He and I had an altercation since you and I last spoke." Hannibal explained as he crossed one leg over the other.

"Describe it to me." Bedelia said plainly without looking up from the notebook as she wrote.

"He was in my office. He saw something he shouldn't have. He ran and I followed. We both ran for so long that we seemed to collapse into one another. We shared another kiss and

something much deeper as well as a result. In a way, there has been both understanding and surrender."

"Do you truly believe that?" Bedelia asked as she took her free hand and grabbed the glass.

"I work hard to convince myself." Hannibal answered after a moment of thought.

"And if you cannot?" Bedelia questioned as she took a nervous sip of her wine.

"He will not find his way to my table," Hannibal explained as he lightly sniffed the wine within the glass he held, "We both recently discovered that neither of us are capable of bringing the other to their table. We have become each other's limit and outlier."

Bedelia gently took another sip of the wine and then set it down beside her, "And how do you intend to deal with this outlier if you cannot bring him to the table?"

It was a good question to ask, considering Will and Hannibal's unique situation. She could conclude easily that Will, based on what she heard through Hannibal, had a fancy for the man. She knew Hannibal at least had an obsession with Will Graham. One day that obsession would lead him off a cliff and into an early grave. Bedelia, despite her composure and "friendship" with Hannibal, hoped that it happened sooner rather than later.

All she wanted was a proper retirement. The one she had now was arguably worse than still being a psychiatrist full time for a variety of patients. At least before she knew Hannibal she didn't fear for her life. She never had to fear patients attacking her until she met the man. She was never sure if Hannibal would bring a knife to their sessions. Perhaps that was why she remained friendly towards him. She hoped that her politeness would keep her off the menu for just a moment longer. Her kindness was her way of delaying the inevitable. And with some luck, she could stop it entirely if Will would do her the kindness of pushing him off the ledge and into death's embrace.

Instead she sat and watched Hannibal as he carefully thought. Of what, she didn't know for sure. There was never any knowing when it came to Hannibal. He could be thinking of which wine she would be paired with or thinking about which centerpiece he would use for his next

dinner party. She hoped that he was dwelling on the question instead of on the taste of her flesh with the right marinade.

“I have a plan in place if Will Graham becomes too close. If things begin to take a turn for the worse, I will guide the outcome into something more positive for myself.” he answered at last before taking a sip of the wine.

“Not similar to how you handled your former patient when he attacked me, I take it?” she questioned him yet again.

He let out a light sigh, clearly sick of her thinly veiled interrogation, “Not in the slightest.”

“LIke you handled your obsession with the papers you brought to me a few weeks ago then?”

“They’re signed. Though it was not the best plan at the time, it was a successful one.”

“Was he awake when he signed, or was he lost to time again?”

“Unimportant. His signature is on the paper. The state he’s in won’t matter to any court.” Hannibal answered.

“And you still believe that to be a worthy plan still?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And how will his boss react when he finds out that Will signed his soul away to the devil that he’s been trying to catch for years?” She added as she wrote onto the notebook yet again.

“There’s not much he can do. He can’t annul it without consent and he can’t change the outcome. It’s done. He’ll yell, but that has become his new normal.”

“And what will *he* think when he finds out?” Bedelia asked as she quickly took another note.

“Let’s hope he never does.” Hannibal answered as he uncrossed his legs and planted them both on the ground.

“We both know he will eventually. Hiding something as binding as that isn’t easy.” She commented as she grabbed the wine bottle and poured the remainder of it into her glass.

“I’ve made him forget a great deal of things. I’ve convinced him of many more. If he ever discovers it I’ll make it into a distant memory…. Similarly to a bad dream.”

“Do you think that would seriously work?”

“It will. I’ll make sure of it.”

Bedelia tried her best not to put her palm to her forehead in response. She wanted to sigh or even groan at the man. She wanted to yell at him for his stupidity. She wanted to do a great deal of things, but she couldn’t. She was his psychiatrist, which meant she had to remain professional for the rest of their time together.

“Would you like my professional opinion, Hannibal?” She asked.

“By all means, it’s why I came to you after all.” he answered.

“I think you’ve become blinded by your obsession with Will Graham.” Bedelia pointed out as she set the notebook aside.

“Elaborate.” Hannibal coldly replied.

“You believe yourself to be more in control of the man than you really are. You claim you can change his way of thinking or bend him to your will like a toy, but you are yet to take into account the idea that he is a real human being with feelings and reactions. You can’t possibly take into account all of his reactions to your– dare I say– rude behavior.” Bedelia reprimanded.

“If I were blind, I wouldn’t have multiple contingency plans in place for him.”

A sigh escaped her lips, but she tried her best to cover it, “Contingency plans that seem to only bring you two closer.”

Hannibal noticed it but worked hard to disregard it, “That isn’t the case.”

“Hannibal, you chased the man as a contingency plan and ended up having sex with him less than twenty four hours later. Perhaps you should reconsider your plans. Maybe it’s time to finally start pushing him away.”

Hannibal’s eyes widened in shock at her words, but then relaxed after a moment. A light smirk grew on his face only a second later.

“Yes, I know about it. I could tell through your body language. You walked in more smug that usual.”

“Trust that I have it under control.” Hannibal scoffed.

“You’ve spent so much time building walls Hannibal. It’s natural to hope that he would dare to climb them, but is it worth the cost that comes with him reaching you?” Bedelia suggested as she finished her glass of wine.

“Will Graham is exactly where I want him,” Hannibal reassured, his tone almost violent with certainty. Abigail and I have put a plan into motion in order to push him away from us both. Between that and the papers, he won’t ever make it to the top of the wall. His fall from it will resemble the same fables we once were told about as children. Will Graham will no longer be of anyone’s concern.”

Bedelia set down the empty glass and looked at the clock. Thank goodness their time was up. Had it been another five minutes she might've said something that would have sealed her seat at his table.

"I think that's a good place to stop for today." she quickly commented as she stood.

She swiftly made her way to the door and opened it. She did not give a verbal hint, but Hannibal knew that the open door was his sign to leave. He did not wish to overstay his welcome. Instead, he simply thanked Doctor Du Maurier and left her to the loneliness of her home.

She slowly shut the door behind her and let out a breath that she didn't know she was holding. He was gone. And for another week, she would be free. She knew that their souls had been forcefully tied together by his careful hands, but she wanted more than anything to sever that tie. It had weighed on her for too long. Each week she opened the door with intent of never letting him in again, but found herself watching him leave knowing he would return. Out of both fear and curiosity she could never seem to turn him away. Perhaps one day she would, but that day clearly was not soon.

Instead, she simply locked the door and muttered words like "good riddance" under her breath as she grabbed another bottle to drown her many emotions towards the man in.

Conversations in a Cell

Chapter Notes

Slight trigger warning

-mentions of kidnapping
-mentions of brainwashing
-mentions of murder
-mentions of cannibalism

There's probably something I forgot but just be warned it mentions a lot of the Hannibal classic topics.

Will said that the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane was beautiful as a joke. He was being sarcastic. He thought Hannibal was also trying to joke as well. He didn't understand how it possibly could've been taken literally. He was confused as to how he became so lost in translation with the man he thought he understood, but clearly it happened. He thought Hannibal and Will were beyond such mundane matters like prison.

Yet here Will was with nothing but bricks surrounding him. His legs were chained together and his left hand was loosely chained to the table. There was no moving when he was in this awful visiting cell. There was no escape. Jack said that the ear he coughed up only a few hours earlier belonged to Abigail. Jack also said that the lures in his house had remains of the victims in every case Will had been a part of. Will didn't know how any of this evidence came to be. He had no memory of it whatsoever, but if it was true then there would be no fleeing home to his dogs now.

He'd give anything to see his pack again. He'd do anything not to stare back at Jack Crawford through the iron bars. He'd kill to get out of this cell.

It would never happen, but he could still fantasize about the ways he would escape. He could easily visualize himself at home amongst his dogs. He'd have a simple dinner on his couch as the television played whatever movie he could find. The dogs would play amongst themselves while Winston obediently laid at Will's feet. Everything would be simple and certain; the complete opposite of the way things were now.

“Will!” Jack said sharply, which pulled him back to reality.

“What Jack.” Will snapped back in response.

“I was trying to apologize. I pushed you too hard. I made you snap. I broke you,” Jack began, “But I need to push you one more time.”

Jack handed a small file to Will by placing it on the table. With his free hand Will reached to grab it. Once it was in his hand he brought it close and opened it. He carefully examined the photos and read through Jack’s notes. He could feel Jack’s eyes on him as he worked; they were difficult not to notice.

The case was gruesome, but they always were. Jack always handed him the more violent and deranged cases. However, this one was different. This case resembled the ones being used as evidence against him, but at the same time did not. The evidence was similar, but this had a few minor details that stood out.

“No, it’s not the same killer.” Will said at last as he carefully placed everything back into the file.

“Are you sure? There’s no chance?” Jack asked as he took the file back from Will.

“I’m as sure about this as I am that I didn’t commit the crimes I’m being framed for.” Will answered with anger slowly forming on his tongue.

“If you didn’t, then who did?” Jack added as he set the file aside.

“You’re the FBI, you figure it out for once!” Will shouted as he tried to stand, but was forced back into his seat by the chain.

“I DID NOT JUST HEAR THAT!” Jack shouted back as he took a step back from the bars.

Jack had seen Will defensive before, but not like this. Will and Jack often disagreed and Will had a tendency to snap at Jack. He had a tendency to yell at Will as a response. Their relationship was held together by a very thin thread. Yet despite the yelling and the rude comments were never as volatile as this. Something was wrong; more wrong than the idea of Will being a killer. Will Graham knew something, but he was hiding it. Why? Who was he trying to protect? Was it himself or someone else?

“Will,” he began, “I’m worried. Talk to me. Tell me what you know.”

“Why are you worried?” Will snapped again, “You aren’t the one being put behind bars.”

Will was avoiding answering the question, which made Jack uneasy. Will knew something, and his refusal to give information to Jack confirmed it.

A part of Jack half expected this reaction. Will was a man of many secrets. Yet at the same time he didn’t expect the man to damn himself in order to keep a secret. Perhaps the secret is more than his simple involvement in the murders.

“I’m worried that we'll learn that you knew what you were doing the whole time. Not talking to me tells me you know something.”

“ Hey, you don't have to be afraid of that, Jack. There is something you should be afraid of, though.”

“Yeah? And what’s that?” Jack asked with a face of curiosity and frustration blended together. It was quite a usual face for Jack, but it seemed darker and worn now.

“The person who’s doing this to me.” Will coldly answered.

“ Someone's doing this to you?”

“Isn’t it obvious?”

“So that’s it? Is it a setup? Why?” Jack questioned as he looked at the glass on his right. Hopefully someone was listening and taking note of the insanity Will was speaking.

“They know the cases. They know forensics. They know that I'm unstable,” Will said as his eyes focused on a piece of the wall ahead of him, “But why would he punish me? I didn’t do anything wrong. After everything I even—- oh.”

“What? What do you know?”

“I’m being punished. That’s why I’m being framed.”

“Being punished? For what?” Jack asked, “you’re not making any sense.”

“I’m being punished for getting too close. That’s why I’m here.”

Jack shot him a look of confusion and anger. It was clear in his eyes that he wanted to know what Will was talking about. Jack couldn’t piece together the fragments that Will provided him, which made him somehow more angry than he already was. He needed answers, yet Will Graham decided to dance around them despite his damning situation.

“The Chesapeake Ripper.” Will said at last.

“And you said you’re being too close to him. Does that mean you know who he is?” Jack questioned him again.

“Yes, but you won’t like my answer Jack.”

“Tell me anyway.”

“Hannibal Lecter.”

Jack scoffed at Will’s words. He muttered something under his breath as he rubbed his temples. Will wasn’t sure what he muttered, but based on his lips Will caught the words ‘Will’, ‘Hannibal’, and ‘each other’. Will let out a fake cough to direct Jack’s attention back to him.

“Do you know how paranoid— and if I’m being honest— *stupid* you sound right now?” Jack said at last.

“Think about it Jack. He checks all the boxes. And I have in fact gotten close to him. It makes the most sense.”

Jack sighed in response, “Yes Will we know how close you and Hannibal have become. We have a copy of the secret certificate in your file now.”

Will raised a brow at Jack. What on earth was he talking about? Will decided to chalk it up to a manipulation tactic that Hannibal used to convince Jack of something. Of what Jack was convinced of, he didn’t know: he’d find out soon enough though.

It was evident to Will that Jack didn’t want to hear the truth. He was blinded by the “good nature” of Hannibal Lecter. Why wouldn’t he be? Hannibal had been nothing but kind to him.

Jack took a deep breath and opened his mouth to speak, but was interrupted by the sound of the door opening behind him. He turned around to see Beverly Katz shutting that same door behind her. Jack turned away from Will and approached Beverly. They spoke in a hushed tone that Will couldn’t hear, but based on the way they both glanced back at him he knew that he was the topic. After a moment of hushed whispers and glances at the brunette at the table,

Jack nodded and left the room. Beverly waited for the door to shut behind Jack before she walked over the table and quickly sat down.

“When he comes back he’s going to arrest you.” Beverly started as she intertwined her fingers with her own,

“I know. I left him no other choice.” Will replied.

“Alana refuses to believe any of it. I heard her screaming at Jack not too long ago over it. She’s in a limbo between denial and anger. We all are.” Beverly added as she looked away from Will and down at her hands.

“I don’t know what to say.” Will coldly interrupted.

“Then don‘t.” Beverly replied with a monotone voice, “Let me do the talking.”

Will nodded in response.

“While you and Alana were discussing the dogs and your ‘romantic undertones’, I asked a favor from a friend. We went through your file and the evidence that seems to point at you. I couldn’t help but notice that you had disappeared for a few days about three weeks ago. I thought you went away on a fishing trip or you weren’t needed, but it turns out Jack called you multiple times for multiple cases. You never even replied.”

He understood the question underneath the statement. Will looked to the mirror at his side, then back at Beverly. He tilted his head slightly to the side in silent questioning.

“He’s gone. I turned the audio off while he was in here with you. What you said to Jack and what you say now won’t be recorded. It’s just a conversation between friends.” Beverly answered, “I don’t want to believe you did this and I need help knowing what to look into first so I can get you out of here.”

Will nodded, “I was occupied with self preservation. I was on the run— trying to escape this…. Him.. There was a cabin that I went to and he followed me.”

“Trouble in paradise I take it? Like an elopement gone wrong almost?” Beverly asked.

“Excuse me?” Will replied with confusion riddled within both his face and his words.

“Hannibal canceled all his appointments for the same amount of days you were gone. Today Jack went to visit him before he came here. He found a ring on his left hand.” Beverly explained.

“I don’t understand how any of this is relevant to my case—“

“Just wait a second,” Beverly interrupted. “Jack had the same confusion you did so he did some of his own digging.”

“And what did he find?”

“A marriage certificate, adoption papers, and a missing persons report.” Beverly answered.

“Okay so how are any of these relevant to each other?”

“The adoption papers were for two men to adopt Abigail. They were the two men from the marriage certificate. They were denied due to the instability of the one. He was deemed unfit to raise her given their circumstances and histories with each other.”

“Hannibal got married and tried to adopt Abigail. And what about the missing persons report?”

“Filed for Abigail, she was the missing person. Hannibal filed it. It stated that she was last seen with a brunette man with glasses and blue eyes. He was wearing a flannel when they were last seen.”

“Hannibal ended up married to a psychopath, how fitting.” Will tried to joke. He let out a light chuckle but quickly stopped when he noticed that Beverly wasn’t laughing with him. “He couldn’t handle the idea of not having her as a daughter so he kidnapped her. That makes sense, but what doesn’t make sense is why we aren’t chasing him down instead. He’s clearly the real killer if he kidnapped her. Who is this guy anyway?”

Beverly simply stared at him.

“Who is he Bev?” Will asked again.

“Will..” her voice trailed off.

Will could feel his blood boiling as she unofficially answered his question. It was him. It was Will who was the psychopath married to Hannibal. It was he who led to the denial of the adoption. And during an episode he took Abigail.

It didn’t make any sense. He would’ve remembered something like that. He would’ve remembered something that horrible. He tried to think and scan his memory for any evidence that he did such a thing, but instead of memories he was met with headaches.

Then he remembered his conversation with Hannibal in the cabin. The morning that they sat across from each other at the table and discussed their options had revealed all to Will. Though Will had voted against the alteration of his mind, Hannibal overruled him and took the liberty of doing it anyway. Hannibal married him against Will’s request not to. Hannibal had painted the picture of an insane profiler in the legal world. He was the father of all the evidence stacked against Will. It wouldn’t surprise him if the lures Jack found in his house were really designed by Hannibal. Perhaps the ear was also part of Hannibal’s list of evidence as well. That meant that Hannibal had killed Abigail and not him.

Hannibal taking Abigail away from him felt arguably worse than him doing it to himself.

Hannibal, by destroying his memory, had eliminated all the other pieces on the chess board. Hannibal had locked Will in a checkmate as revenge for getting close to his heart.

“Will?” Beverly asked, “are you okay?”

“Surprisingly, yes. Everything is finally making sense.”

He paused. There was a silence between the two, as if Beverley was waiting for Will to continue and Will was trying to search for something to say.

“Maybe it’s a good thing Jack is going to arrest me.” Will finally said at last.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because if he doesn’t I might kill my husband.”

Romance in Revenge

Chapter Notes

Of course, I have a tiny list of trigger warnings!

-violence
-hostage situation
-mentions of brainwashing/manipulation
-complete mental breakdown
-mentions of murder

In truth, Will Graham decided that Hannibal should not be spared from his wrath. Neither Jack Crawford or the threat of the death penalty could keep Will away from revenge. He would go gladly to the coffin if it meant he would get to meet Hannibal in hell. He had ripped everything away from Will, and there was nothing to be done that would warrant mercy.

After Beverly left him alone in the cell Will sat and schemed. His overly active imagination helped him picture exactly how he would do it. And when Jack returned to collect him, the plan was put into motion.

Will cooperated for the most part. When Jack replaced his chains with something more mobile for the transfer he did not protest or resist. When the three guards came into the room and grabbed him he did not snap or shove them off. Instead, he allowed them to escort him to the transport van. And when the doors were shut, threatening to never open into a free world again, Will watched them with nothing short of a grin on his face.

It was about a twenty minute drive from Will's cell to the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Will only intended to stay on the transport for about twelve of those minutes.

He counted each second in his head and waited until he hit the eleventh minute. When he did he suddenly slammed his head into the guard next to him. He did so about four times before the guard finally was unconscious. It seemed his thick skull was becoming his most valuable weapon these days.

He grabbed the gun and the taser from the guard and aimed them at the other two. He shot them both in the foot and then used the taser to immobilize them for a short moment. While the guards slumped around the transport van, Will dug through their belts to find the key. It was on the guard closest to the doors, hidden among several others on a ring. He quickly fumbled with the ring of keys to find one that would remove the cuffs from his wrists. It took him a moment but he found it and freed himself. Once he found his freedom he quickly unlocked the doors. He violently swung them open to reveal the road that was blurred from the speed they were traveling at. Will debated staying in the van for a moment. It would be so much safer. There was no chance of death in the safety of the vehicle.

Then again, the vehicle was sure to lead Will towards his death.

Will was faced with a choice: risk death for revenge by jumping, or seal his fate by staying. Though he wanted to stay, he knew he couldn't. He refused to get any closer to the grave while Hannibal Lecter was still breathing. Though he had a choice, the debate behind that choice had melted away until only one of those options were plastered in Will's imagination.

And when the van slowed down to make a turn, Will jumped from the back.

He hit the ground with a large thud. He could feel his shoulder as it dislocated from landing upon it. Will became instantly aware of every scrape and bruise that formed from the horrific landing, but at least he was free.

He watched as the van disappeared into the horizon as he looked back. It was only a matter of time before they realized that Will escaped. Of course, that meant that Will had to begin the journey back to his "loving husband". He quickly scanned himself for any injuries beyond the scrapes and found nothing that needed attention. With that in mind he snapped his shoulder back into its socket. He grabbed the gun that his dislocated arm was holding off the ground and began his travels.

He had three options now. There were three places he could ambush Hannibal at. All of them were both ironic and poetic in their own way. As Will disappeared into the woods next to the road he thought about each of those options.

The first was Hannibal's Baltimore Home. This would be the most enjoyable of the three options. Will ached to rip Hannibal's life from him in the safety of his home. It would be quite ironic for him but so entertaining for Will Graham. He would tear Hannibal's life from his cold and apathetic body in a place he thought himself to be safe; just as he did to Will. He couldn't help but smile at the idea of giving Hannibal the same treatment that Hannibal gave him over these last few weeks. He couldn't wait to rip away the illusion of love and understanding to reveal the hate beneath it.

The second option was Hannibal's office. This option would be the most poetic choice. In the same place that their dance began Will would finally end it. Will would cut the music short and rip Hannibal away from the dance floor of life there. It felt right. Where they met would be where Hannibal would die. Where they first kissed Will would become a widower. Where Hannibal tied their lives together Will would come with a sharp blade to break free. It would be difficult to sneak into the office and kill him without attracting any attention, but if Will would be faced with the death penalty it would be for a murder he actually committed. Let them find him.

The third option was the cabin. The tiny cabin already had so many painful memories housed within its walls, so why not add one more? It was a blend of both poetic and ironic and Will couldn't help but consider this option because of it. The only problem was there would be no guarantee that Hannibal would ever return to the cabin. Though it was the safest and most remote place to carry out his execution, it would be a hassle trying to get Hannibal there.

So Will chose Hannibal's office as the place to go, and began to make the long journey.

It took Will about three hours to walk to the office. He didn't want to attract more attention with theft, and given their recent chase he knew that his body could handle the beating sun against his hair while he walked.

When he got to the office he waited at the exit designated for patients. He remembered Hannibal's list of patients and engraved it in his mind long before the kiss and the horrors that followed it. He knew that he was always the last appointment. He knew who came before him and what time they often left. He remembered that Hannibal also kept an hour between that patient and his appointment with Will, which meant he had time to carry out the execution before the body was doula be discovered. With that in mind, Will sat in the chair knowing that the door would open in just a minute or two.

And sure enough it did. Will nodded to the patient as he left and then snuck through the door before it shut. Will swiftly dove behind the first object he could find in order to scope out the terrain. He needed to know where Hannibal was if he had any hope of catching him by surprise.

He saw Hannibal by his desk with his back to where Will was hiding. His posture was not at its usual perfection and he almost seemed to slouch the slightest bit. If Will didn't know any better, he might've thought that Hannibal looked upset, but Will did know better. Hannibal was nothing short of a monster. He had no remorse and he certainly had no sense of guilt or shame. There was no way that Hannibal could feel something as mundane as sadness. And even if he did, what could possibly cause it? His regret towards pushing Will into an early grave? No, it could never be that. He was most likely celebrating the man's death. It meant he would finally be free of Will's control over him, and they both knew it.

Will clicked the safety off the gun and slowly approached the man at his desk. He took each step carefully and slowly as if to prevent the floor from creaking. He knew that Hannibal's perfectionist nature would never allow a board to make any creaking noise, yet Will still walked as if it would.

Will was close enough to see the hint of silver in Hannibal's hair, which meant he had to be extra cautious with the man and himself. One wrong move could alert him.

There was only one small problem: Will forgot about Hannibal's strong and impeccable sense of smell.

The second Will could see the various shades in Hannibal's hair the man seemed to perk up. It was almost as if the man could sense his presence. He tapped something lightly and then turned the chair with a smirk on his face, but it was quickly wiped away by the sight of the gun.

"I really must introduce you to a new aftershave. It reeks." Hannibal commented.

"Maybe you should've gotten me one as a wedding gift." Will snapped back.

Hannibal frowned slightly at the reply, “so you at long last remembered the wedding Mylimasis?”

“No, I had your picture painted for me in a cell that you put me in.”

“I did no such thing Will.”

Will groaned loudly and pressed the gun to Hannibal’s forehead, “I might’ve believed that I killed Abigail, but I know for a fact that I didn’t kill the rest. I wasn’t sick. I didn’t have you poking around my head yet! I didn’t do it, which means you did!”

“I’m offended that you would suggest that I killed Abigail Hobbs.” Hannibal iterated in response.

“Well I sure as hell didn’t and you’re the only killer I know!”

“I said that we would serve her better than Garett Jacob Hobbs. Killing her does not exactly serve her better. Wouldn’t you agree Will?”

“Then prove it! Prove you didn’t do it!” Will shouted with a sense of desperation in his voice.

“I will, but I will need you to lower the gun and trust me for a moment.” Hannibal calmly replied.

“And why on *earth* would I do that Hannibal?”

“Because it’s hard to drive and provide proof that your husband wants when there’s a gun to your head”

Will slowly lowered the gun, “fair enough. Lead the way *darling.* ”

_____

Though the gun was lowered, Will kept the gun pointed at his husband while he drove his fancy gray SUV. Hannibal didn’t bother to complain; there were some battles that there was no point in trying to fight. Besides, if he tried he would be met with a bullet to the head.

“In a way mylimasis,” Hannibal began, “this could be considered our first date.”

“I don’t know Hannibal, I found running for my life to be quite romantic.” Will replied.

“I’m truly sorry about that mylimasis. That night and everything before it should not have happened.”

“Oh shut up and drive Hannibal.” Will snapped back, “and what is a Millie-may-sis?”

“It means beloved.” Hannibal replied quickly

“In what language?” Will asked again.

“Lithuanian.”

“You know Lithuanian?” Will asked, his voice monotone and emotionless.

“It’s my first language. I learned through conversations with my father as a child. My mother taught me English alongside him, but I seemed to pick up both my father’s and my native language at a much swifter pace.”

“Hm.” Will replied coldly, “I didn’t know you were Lithuanian.”

“You and I spend too much time pinning ourselves against each other. We leave no time for us to learn about the other or the world in which they come from. Perhaps we should find a way to make that time in the future.” Hannibal suggested.

Will sighed, “There may not be a future for me Hannibal. You framed me for your murders. It’s the whole reason we’re in this mess, remember?”

“I know, but I intend to make your situation temporary.” Hannibal answered softly.

“Temporary? Jack found fishing lures with the remains of *your* victims!” Will shouted, his grip on the gun becoming tighter with his anger, “how did you even manage to get those into my house? It must’ve been *so* difficult!”

“It was quite simple actually. Both you and your dogs were away, which made it easy to enter and put them into place. It was quite painless.”

“I was being sarcastic!!” Will screamed at him. He then groaned and slammed the back of his head against the headrest of the seat.

Hannibal did not dare to say anything else in response. It seemed that anything he said would make Will Graham more angry than he already was. Instead they drove to the sound of silence for the remainder of the trip.

They arrived at the one floor house of Garrett Jacob Hobbs. It was still littered with spray paint and trash from the angry mob that followed the case. Hannibal got out of the car and made his way to the passenger side in order to open the door for Will. Despite that kindness, Will kept the gun pointed at Hannibal as he stepped out. He nudged his head to the side slightly as a silent way of urging Hannibal forward.

Hannibal walked up towards the garage, which still had the black spray paint plastered upon it. Will, in a slightly better mood now that he was out of the car, couldn't help but laugh a bit. Hannibal Lecter was standing next to the black letters that read "cannibal" while waiting for him. It was hilariously fitting. If Will didn't have his phone confiscated when he was arrested he might've taken a photo of Hannibal in this moment. He would've sent it to Jack Crawford as a "fuck you" if he weren't hiding from the police. He might've even sent it to Freddie Lounds and suggested that she use it as a cover photo for the article she would write to expose Hannibal. It was a shame he did not have his phone.

Hannibal turned away from the writing on the garage and walked along the sidewalk that led from the garage to the front door. Despite the littering and the vandalism, the sidewalk and front porch remained untouched by the angry mob. When they reached the door Hannibal opened it and invited Will inside. He reluctantly stepped inside the Hobbs house.

They both began to walk through the house and made their way into the kitchen subconsciously. Neither of them intended to make their way into that room, yet there they stood among the dried blood of the person Will had killed. There were new stains that Will didn't recognize. These were fresher and seemed to have a different shade of red.

"It's as if Abigail was supposed to die in this kitchen." Hannibal commented while Will examined the stains, "Nothing we did could change that."

"The blood suggests their throat was cut. They lost great gouts of blood.There's an unmistakable arterial spray." Will said as he analyzed the new stains on the ground. He decided to ignore Hannibal. "They haven't found her body. Just the one piece. She could still be alive."

Hannibal's face deepened with sadness, "I was a witness. She came to me. She cried from fear of you. She left me to go isolate in her old room. She never made it there. Instead you found her at the stairs and dragged her by the hair back into this room. You slit her throat and then attacked me. I barely escaped with my life."

"No." Will whispered, "I would never kill her."

"You wouldn't, but Garett Jacob Hobbs would. Your eyes had the same hunger that he did when he tried to do what you have done. That's what everyone has been trying to show you

Will."

The gun began to shake in Will's hand, but he raised it to aim it at Hannibal's forehead.

"Stop lying! All you've done is lie to me!" Will yelled, sweat forming on his brow and tears welling in his eyes, "you lied about the kisses in your office and hid the memories from me! You lied about our relationship! You stripped me of my choice to marry you and then lied to everyone about my non existent hand in that marriage! You lied about showing me the proof that you didn't kill her! And you lied about not lying to me again! You are nothing but lies on top of more lies! Where's the truth you promised me?!"

Hannibal simply watched him as his voice broke between words. He didn't move or try to react in any way. To make any move would be to practically waltz his way into a coffin.

"I've lied to you," Hannibal said at last, "there is no denying it. I lied about the amount of kisses we shared in my office. I stripped you of those memories. I lied about our marriage. I stole both the memory and the choice from you. I lied about the amount of lies I've painted for you, but I would not lie about this. Abigail Hobbs is dead. Between the stains on the floor, the ear that Jack Crawford has, and my eyewitness account, the evidence is stacked against you. I would not lie about her death or your hand in it."

"Please don't lie to me again!" Will begged as he stepped closer to Hannibal.

Hannibal did not reply. He simply locked eyes with Will, the sadness in Will becoming evident on Hannibal's face. A single tear rolled down Hannibal's cheek, but he quickly wiped it away. Almost instantly after the tear was wiped away his forehead was met with the cold metal of the pistol that Will was shakily holding.

"You ruined my life!" Will screamed, his own tears now rushing down his face like a flowing river that finally broke through the dam, "I had a life before you! I had my dogs! I had my house! It was a quiet life of solitude, but it was my life! I was happy. But you had to come in with your murders and manipulation! You managed to destroy everything I made for myself! You took my dogs from me! You took the possibility of going home! You ripped any sense of freedom from me! You stripped me of any sense of choice and chained me to you! You took my life from me, and you couldn't even leave me my own mind! You had to take that too!"

Will stepped closer, his body almost against Hannibal's now.

"I'm going to kill you for what you did!" Will spat.

"Do you believe you're capable?" Hannibal questioned.

"After the stunts you've been pulling? Without a doubt. I'm going to kill you Hannibal."

"Then do it mylimasis." Hannibal cooed.

Will held the gun for a moment, the two men locked still in this deadly moment. Their long dance of destruction had led them beyond their chase and beyond the cabin to this moment. It was Hannibal's design to have the gun pressed against him. Hannibal wanted to prove Will's own weakness to him, but Will couldn't allow that to happen.

Yet for some reason it still did.

"I'm going to kill you! I'm going to kill you!" Will breathed as the gun seemed to lower against his will. He kept repeating himself as his hand fell to its side and his grasp on the gun was released. When the gun hit the ground Hannibal swiftly kicked it away from them and wrapped his arms around Will in an embrace. Will raised his fist and hit the side of his fists against Hannibal's chest in protest.

"I'm going to kill you!" Will cried as the hitting slowed and Will began to melt into the touch, "I'm… going… to kill… you…"

Will after a moment gave up resistance and found himself with his head in Hannibal's chest. Despite his mind aching to rip away from the man, his aching and tortured heart found comfort in his arms. They didn't speak. They didn't curse or scream at each other. Instead, Hannibal held Will as he cried into his expensive suit. He knew that the tears would forever

stain the clothes and make them unwearable, but in Hannibal's eyes Will was worth it. He wouldn't mind buying another suit if it meant that Will finally let out the pent up pain in his broken heart.

As Will sobbed, Hannibal planted an array of kisses in his hair. Will found it to be quite comforting, but not enough to stop the never ending flow of tears. It had been too long since Will last cried, and he was going to finally let himself break down while he still had the time and the embrace of his tormentor.

"I know you may not want to hear it," Hannibal softly began when Will finally stopped crying, "but you'll have to go back to prison soon. I recorded the conversation in my office and sent it to Jack in order to alert him."

"I don't want to go." Will breathed as he wiped away the remaining tears onto Hannibal's shoulder.

"I know, but they're on their way. They'll be here any second now."

"I don't want to go." Will repeated.

"It's only temporary. I will collect you as soon as an opportunity presents itself." Hannibal replied softly as his grip on Will seemed to tighten.

"Just stay here then," Will softly begged, "just one more happy memory before I go."

"Of course mylimasis. I'll stay until they rip you away from me." Hannibal cooed.

The two men remained locked in their embrace, their arms wrapped around each other and their heads leaning upon each other in a loving embrace. The two husbands finally seemed to have a moment in the chaos of Hannibal's creation in which they could simply exist. There was nothing but each other in their world. Even as the sirens wailed and zoomed closer to them they did not let go. When the armed men stormed the building in search of Will,

Hannibal did not let go. And as promised, he held Will until Jack Crawford ordered their separation.

And as quickly as their peaceful moment began, it came to a swift end as Will was tossed back into the van with double the restraints and then driven away from the house in which his nightmare began.

Hannibal didn't keep many of his promises to Will, but he intended to keep both that he made in this house. The first was complete. All that was left now was to free Will from the prison of Hannibal's design.

Lost Time

Chapter Notes

Once again I am providing a trigger warning list for the following things

-cannibalism
-mutilation
-descriptions of violence
-drugging
-needles

Visiting hours were both the highest and the lowest part of Will's day depending entirely on who showed up. He learned that very quickly during the three weeks since his temporary escape. If Beverly or Alana visited him, then he felt more relaxed and less like an estranged beast. When Jack or Hannibal visited, then Will Graham found himself counting down the seconds until they executed him. He begged for death the most when his husband visited. Will Graham had eventually made the request to refuse Hannibal entry to the facility, which Frederick Chilton agreed to as long as he was allowed entry into Will's mind. Will and Frederick shook on the matter and shortly after discussed how and when Frederick Chilton would pick his brain. Will already had one man fishing through his mind and wrecking it, so what was one more?

So when the doors to the hospital are locked and the lights go out Will was escorted by an employee named Matthew to Frederick Chilton's office.

Matthew unlocked the door and gestured Will inside. The door was locked immediately after Will stepped through. A small wooden chair sat in the corner to Will's right. To the chair's right there was a small table made of the same wood. Will made his way to it and sat in the chair. He sat forward, which meant facing Frederick in the chair. He watched the man he wrote with his right hand and held his head with his left. Frederick let out a deep sigh after a moment, and then stood up from his large desk.

Will watched him open a draw and take out a metal box. Upon watching him open the draw, a chill shot up Will's spine. He half expected a knife to be revealed even after the many times the box was instead. Frederick took the metal box and carried it carefully to the small table next to the wooden chair. And while the psychiatrist grabbed a chair for himself, the curly

haired brunette opened the box to reveal the leather straps and syringes full of clear liquid. Will wasn't sure what exactly was in the liquid, but he did know it helped him access the memories that Hannibal closed off to him. It slowly washed away his husband's influence one memory at a time.

Will had seen a great deal of things thanks to Frederick Chilton's mysterious liquid. Will had seen Hannibal using a similar syringe on him in his office. Will had felt the taste of his lips several more times, and all of them seemed to be followed by flashing lights and different syringes. Many memories of Abigail had been returned to him as well, but none of them seemed to hint at his hand in her death. None of the restored memories suggested he was an innocent man either. A lot of Will's questions seemed to remain unanswered. There were too many holes left unfilled in his memory. There were too many gaps.

Perhaps these holes and gaps between memories were the reason why he kept letting Chilton pick through his mind long after the agreed upon duration of these "experiments". It was Will's desire to prove his innocence to himself that drove him back into the chair in Chilton's office time and time again; that and an endless search for a hint into Hannibal's scheme.

When Chilton grabbed the leather strap Will found his hands shaking. Chilton, not caring for the gentleness of his mannerisms, pressed Will's left arm against the arm of the wood chair as he forced the strap onto Will's arm.

"I need you to stay still." Frederick Chilton firmly commanded as he dug into the box and pulled out a syringe.

Will tried his best to remain still like he was told, but his body subconsciously started to press against the chair. Despite the many times that he underwent the same procedure, his mind still searched for ways to escape it. Will's panicked eyes darted around the room in search of an escape plan. Will had to remind his body that he was not in danger. He was in Chilton's office, not Lecter's. And while he knew there was always something that could go wrong there was always the odd sense of embrace within the idea that anything was better than the safety of Hannibal Lecter's "help". Anything was better than that man's help.

When Will seemed to calm down, Chilton stuck the needle of the syringe into a vein in Will's forearm. He pressed lightly against it and slowly forced the liquid within it into the vein. Will gritted his teeth; it was such an uncomfortable sensation to him. He could almost feel the liquid as it blended with his blood. He could feel the pressure of that same blood as it

pounded against his skin in response to the building pressure. And Will could feel his blood as it came rushing through his body when the leather strap was finally removed. Now it was only a matter of time before the strange liquid in his body took hold.

Will watched Chilton as Chilton watched him. It was clear in the doctor's eyes that his eyes were locked on Will out of curiosity more than concern. Chilton only cared to experiment on a mind with encephalitis; he was presented with an unethical opportunity and he was taking it. He did not care about Will or his lost time in the slightest. After all, it wasn't every day that a mind was as scrambled and ill as Will Graham's. He was nothing more than an experiment to Frederick Chilton, but at least he knew that. There were no disguises with them.

"Remember to tell me what you see after." Chilton reminded him.

Will rolled his eyes, "I always do."

"I know. Just a reminder."

As soon as Chilton's words escaped his lips, Will could feel his eyes becoming heavier. The man's words took longer to register in Will's usually sharp mind. Breathing seemed to take all of his strength. Sweat dripped down his face from the newfound strain on his body. At the new heaviness in his body Will leaned his head back against the wall. He looked to Chilton one last time as he set aside the used syringe, then closed his eyes at last.

—----------

When he opened his eyes he stood at the back door into a house. He looked behind him to find nothing but forest behind him. At his feet he could see the indentations of small feet– presumably a young girl's, against the ground leading into the house. The distance between them suggested that the girl was in a rush. Was she trying to escape something, or was she the one on the hunt?

Will saw a small window to the left of the door with two people on the other side of the glass. One wore a suit and folded their overcoat on their right arm. His three piece suit all were

identical, and the tie stood out just enough to direct focus but not enough to not clash with the rest of the ensemble. He was a clean-shaven man who clearly cared about appearances. And though Will could not register every feature, it was clear that he was looking at Hannibal through the window.

The other was a girl. She wasn't a child but she did not appear as an adult either. She wore a light scarf around her neck. The scarf was a muted red; much different than the pastel salmon and sage colors in her sweater. Her brown hair was pin straight and fell past the shoulder. The girl held a demeanor of feebleness, but the way she spoke with the man suggested that she was anything but that. Will could recognize her anywhere. She was the daughter he had no ties to. She was Abigail Hobbs.

Will looked away from the window and made his way to the door. He opened it just enough to slither inside and then shut it silently behind him. He swiftly found a place to hold his cover, and when he did he began to listen into their conversation. Why he felt the need to hide despite his close relationship with Hannibal was unclear, but he didn't dwell too much on the matter.

"I'm sorry I could not protect you in this life." Hannibal softly said as he pulled Abigail into a hug.

"Am I going to die now?" she asked, her voice reeking of defeat.

"Not entirely." Hannibal answered, "But I'll need you to trust me."

Abigail nodded, "Alright."

Hannibal released the girl from his embrace and made his way towards Will's place of hiding. Upon watching him Will could feel his heart as it pounded in his chest. The brunette couldn't move, so he pressed his body against the wall and hoped that Hannibal's peripheral vision didn't spot him. He kept an eye locked on him as he walked past Will and into another room. As soon as watched the man disappear into the room Will turned away and crept towards a safer location. He took a quick and careful step away, but the floorboards gave him away. A loud creak echoed through the house and signaled his location to anyone else in the home.

A shadow seemed to form in front of him; the shape forming the shape of a man. His shoulders seemed straight and almost boxlike. Will turned frantically to face the source of the shadow and found Hannibal smirking at him with his hands behind his back.

"Ah Will." Hannibal cooed, "I've been expecting you."

Will's heart seemed to sink. He could feel it scrambling for protection within his stomach. And as his heart did so the stomach seemed to collapse on itself in nervousness and fear.

"You have?" Will asked, his voice trembling slightly.

"Of course." Hannibal answered, "Eavesdropping and stealth is not necessary *mano širdis* . You are always welcome at my side."

Will, despite the fear screaming in his mind, could feel the corners of his mouth curl into a smile, "I didn't want to ruin the moment."

The side of his mind that was looking back on this moment as a result of Chilton's experimentations was confused by his own behavior. What was happening? Why was Will sneaking around and then acting so casual upon discovery? That side of his mind tried to understand its past self and what was causing it to act this way.

He was even more confused by the other side of the mind that saw this flashback as the present moment. That side of the mind was consumed by nothing but thoughts of Hannibal. It betrayed itself by calling the man his lover. It went against everything Will stood for by counting down each second until the man would kiss him again. Though Will understood himself for thinking so fondly of the man who had protected him time and time again, he couldn't help but also feel disgust at those kind thoughts towards him. Though he protected Will, he was also the source of every heartbreak and trauma that Will had. Hannibal chased him through the woods for hours. Hannibal had framed him for multiple murders. He didn't deserve such kind thoughts towards him.

Hannibal held out a hand for Will, which he found himself accepting against his better judgment. He watched with nothing but the wretchedness of kindness as Hannibal kissed his hand and then led him gently into the room where Abigail was.

Upon seeing Will, Abigail's body pressed against the nearby cabinet. She looked at Hannibal with her eyes wide like a deer in headlights, then back to Will. Her mouth opened but no words escaped. As he and Hannibal came closer she would slowly back away.

"Abigail, it's alright. He won't hurt you. The episode you witnessed was my creation. I won't allow him to hurt you." Hannibal said in a much smoother and buttery voice than usual.

She did not respond. She did not show understanding. She simply took another step back as her wide eyes remained locked on Will Graham.

"I have a swiss army knife in my jacket pocket," Will announced, "Hand it to her, and then pat me down. Prove I'm not a threat."

Hannibal did as he was told. First he set down a large bag on the counter nearest to him. He then gently reached into Will's pocket to reveal the knife that Will had mentioned. He held it out with the blade pointed at himself for Abigail to take. She took a few steps forward and cautiously accepted. With the handle of the blade embedded in both of her hands she pointed the metal at Will as a simple precaution. In response Will held his hands up like he was under arrest and awaited further inspection. The two men locked eyes, and Will gave the signal of consent to have his pockets checked. Hannibal slowly ran his hands along Will's body and into every pocket he could find.

"This is so awkward." Will commented as Hannibal slid his hands from Will's chest down to his legs.

"I'd use the word familiar," Hannibal whispered in response, "reminds me of our morning together— alone in the cabin with only the birds and sunlight to keep us company."

"Hannibal, please shut up. There is a child present." Will snapped.

“She’s old enough to know it’s part of the human experience.”

“EW! You two…… gross.” Abigail blurted, “if you’re going to flirt, do it somewhere else.”

Will could feel his face heating up and turning red with embarrassment, so he tried to hide it by cupping his face in his hand as Hannibal finished checking his every pocket.

Hannibal stood and kissed Will’s hair before he rejoined Abigail’s side, “He holds no other weapons. He’s safe.”

Abigail whispered something inaudible in Hannibal’s ear, and he nodded in response. Immediately after, Hannibal looked at Will with his usual emotionless expression before he grabbed the bag from the counter. He held it out to Abigail like an offering or a present to the girl. Abigail dug her hand into it to reveal medical equipment typically used for drawing blood. Will knew that somewhere in his mind he knew the name of the equipment, but he couldn’t seem to recall it. When the equipment registered with Abigail she looked up at Hannibal in both fear and confusion.

“We’re going to make a crime scene.” Hannibal explained, “but in order to do so I will need a few bodily donations. To start I will need blood.”

Abigail nodded silently in response and threw herself onto the nearest counter. She rolled up a sleeve and held out her exposed arm for Hannibal. Will watched as Hannibal prepped the equipment and then stuck a small needle into one of her veins. Once the blood was being drawn Hannibal looked to Will; giving him a slight smile in acknowledgement. Will couldn’t help but feel like this was somehow a much more disturbing version of the night with the ambulance.

Things seemed so much simpler when Hannibal had his hand in a body while the FBI tracked down a killer. There was no worry about Hannibal then. The Chesapeake Ripper felt so distant and less concrete. The ripper felt more like an idea than it felt like a real person then. The title bestowed upon Will’s psychiatrist and friend didn’t feel as dangerous when it wasn't associated with Hannibal. Now there was always a fear with the man before him, and hesitation with his attraction to him. He could never be sure which identity Will would ever be greeted with. Will could never know whether or not he created his most sacred moments

with Hannibal Lecter or the Chesapeake Ripper, and he would always fear the day he made memories with the ripper.

Maybe that was why he snuck into the building in the first place.

“That should be enough.” Hannibal commented, which snapped Will out of his own head.

He watched as Hannibal carefully removed the needle from her vein and carefully covered it with a gauze. She slid herself off the counter and tilted her head towards the bag of blood Hannibal now held. Will found the sight quite fitting. Hannibal the cannibal was holding blood in a small bag like he was a modern vampire. It took all of Will’s strength not to slightly chuckle at the sight.

Hannibal pulled Abigail into his arms and wrapped one firmly around her neck. He used his other arm to hand her the equipment that held her blood.

“Would you like to do the honors?” he asked her as she accepted his offer.

Will took a few steps back and watched as Hannibal gently swayed her around the room. She took her blood and splattered it throughout the room. Blood hit almost every surface, but it hit the floor most of all. The floor had a small pool of blood that made a home next to two other pools of blood that held similar shades of red but not identical to hers. Her eyes focused on the direction the blood went in as she sprayed them with almost terrifying accuracy around the room. If Will Graham didn’t watch the blood spill he might’ve thought that the stains on the walls were arterial sprays. He might’ve thought that Abigail Hobbs had died in this room next to the dried pools of red that once held her father and mother.

After a few moments the bag of her blood was empty. She and Hannibal stopped swaying around the room. Abigail Hobbs was now dead.

Abigail looked at Will and smiled weakly before she gently removed Hannibal’s arm from her neck. She glanced at Hannibal and gave a slight nod to him before she disappeared into the dining room.

“I’m going to make tea for Abigail while her blood dries. Would you like some?” Hannibal asked as he watched Abigail take her usual seat at the table.

“That’d be nice. Thank you.” Will answered as he took Abigail’s former place beside Hannibal.

“In that case, may I suggest you join Abigail at the table? I don’t want the blood to smear.”

“Actually I was thinking that maybe you and I should talk” Will replied, “that ... ... event….. between us, it shouldn’t have happened. It was a m—“

“I’m growing quite tired of that word. Tu labai apsunkini meilę mano širdžiai.” Hannibal interrupted as he gently placed a kettle of water onto the stove, “Leave. We’ll talk about this at a later time.”

“Hannibal.”

“Leave.” Hannibal firmly spat.

Will threw his hands into the air as a silent surrender before he walked away from the kitchen. He joined Abigail at the table, sitting at one of the two heads of the table. His back was turned towards Hannibal in the kitchen as a silent offense towards him. He looked over to Abigail who was twiddling with her thumbs.

“You alright?” Will asked her as he leaned back in his chair.

“Yeah, it’s just I’ve never been dead before.” Abigail answered.

“How does it feel to be dead?”

“No different than being alive. I just have to be more careful now.” Abigail replied without looking up at Will. She didn’t want to. She never wanted to look at him.

“Where are you going to go now that you’re dead?”

“With Hannibal. He says it’s best to keep me under their noses where they’ll never look.”

“He’s smart. I would’ve done the same thing if I were him.” Will commented.

“So about Hannibal,” Abigail began, “are you two….”

She crossed her fingers as a way of silently finishing her question. Will couldn’t help but laugh at the gesture.

“Yes– kinda..— I don’t know. It’s really complicated between us.” Will answered after a moment of thought.

“Why? He’s obsessed with you.”

“That’s not the issue. The issue is *what* he is. Jack has been following his…. work…. for years. If anything happened, if Jack ever discovered him, I’d become guilty too by association. I don’t know if I want to risk my whole life for him.”

“You killed too.” Abigail added.

“I didn’t eat them.” Will snapped back.

Abigail laughed and muttered something under her breath.

“Excuse me?” Will asked, “what did you say?”

Before she could answer or dodge the question Hannibal emerged with two cups of tea. He set one in front of Abigail and another in front of Will. His gaze lingered on Will for just a moment before he sat at the other head of the table. Hannibal didn’t have a teacup for himself, which came as a slight surprise to Will. He thought nothing of it and looked at Abigail, who had picked up the ceramic teacup and taken a sip of the tea. She smiled slightly at the taste and followed it with another sip. Will did not drink the tea yet; he decided to let it cool for a moment first.

Will looked at Hannibal and Abigail at the table together with him. He couldn’t help but feel a sense of comfort with them both despite all that happened between them. They were three outcasts drawn together by one tragic event. They all were very different people with personalities and interests that never seemed to clash well with each other, yet they blended well together. It almost reminded him of the future he had pictured for the three of them.

“What topics did you and Abigail discuss? I’d like to be filled in.” Hannibal commented as he unbuttoned his suit jacket and relaxed into his seat.

“You actually.” Will replied calmly.

“All good things I hope.” Hannibal added.

Abigail snorted. Both Will and Hannibal simultaneously shot their heads over to Abigail as she tried to recover her usual composure. Once she did so the two men focused once more on each other.

“Not exactly.” Will said at last.

“Care to elaborate?”

“We discussed your obsession with me and the consequences of associating with you in a more romantic light.”

“So our tale is similar to that of Eros and Psyche.” Hannibal reiterated.

“Seeing you, the real you, has doomed any chances of ‘us’ ever existing.” Will explained as he lifted the tea to his lips. He examined the liquid with a newfound sense of dread. His gut tightened more with every inch closer the tea came to his lips. Yet Will set aside that gut instinct and took several sips of the tea.

“The light has been held to my face. You’ve seen me. Yet unlike the Greek tragedy it is not Eros to be pulled away from the marriage; the troubled Psyche runs from her love instead. She couldn’t help but fear the lies and the secrecy Eros endured to protect her from Aphrodite.” Hannibal elucidated.

“Can you blame her? Things have become too complex now that she is truly aware of him. She has to face Aphrodite and pray the secrets about Eros don’t come pouring out.” Will added.

“Aphrodite is not all powerful. She is not Zeus. Eros could protect Psyche from her wrath. They could go back home and be happy. They could be married and he would give her everything she ever longed for.” Hannibal suggested.

“It’s too late. She’s too scared that Eros will lie or deceive her again. She knows the abuse of the gods and she doesn’t want to risk it being inflicted upon her if something were to happen. There will forever be a place in her heart and beside her for Eros, but she cannot stay wed to him. Everything she holds dear hangs in the balance.” Will answered, which shot down Hannibal’s suggestion.

Abigail snorted again. Only this time the snort turned into a roaring laughter. It didn’t stop. It couldn’t stop.

Abigail rocked back and forth in her chair as she gripped her stomach, “You’re too late, he already has you.” She repeated over and over again between gasps for air.

Will could only look back and forth between Abigail and Hannibal in horror at the scene. She was talking in riddles that didn’t make sense. Hannibal didn’t have him. He had his free will still and he chose to end their complex affair. There was nothing else to it.

Will, both uncomfortable and concerned by Abigail’s behavior, went to stand and aid her clearly shattered mind. He found that he could no longer move. He looked at Hannibal with his eyes wide and watery with confusion. He had been drugged.

Hannibal stood and made his way over to Abigail. Her laughter continued until Hannibal placed a hand over her mouth to silence her.

“I’m going to take your ear like we previously discussed.” Hannibal said lightly “This shouldn’t hurt, the tea ensures that. Do you understand?”

Abigail nodded in response. Upon seeing the nod Hannibal disappeared into the kitchen and returned to Abigail with a large knife and a long clear tube. He set the tube onto the table and refocused on the knife. He examined it for a moment; taking in both the features of the knife and the features of his reflection through the metal of the blade. It was a plain blade, but it would serve the Chesapeake Ripper well. He pressed the blade against the ear and began to saw at it.

Will wanted to scream. He wanted to cry out for Abigail and beg for her to be spared. Yet despite every effort he couldn’t let out a sound. All he could do was fight back tears and watch the blood as it oozed down the side of Abigail’s face. Her blood covered the side of her face and he couldn’t do anything to slow the bleeding.

After a minute or two of vigorous sawing, Hannibal was able to separate Abigail from her left ear. Abigail passed out immediately after from blood loss. Once the ear fell onto the ground Hannibal put on two rubber gloves and picked it up. He turned to Will and brought himself behind the chair that the drugged man was sitting on. He pulled it back and away from the table. Once there was space for Hannibal between Will and the table he kneeled in his expensive suit at Will’s feet. He looked up at Will, who’ eyes were now sinking down towards him as a result of the tea. They locked eyes, but the two sets read two completely

different emotions. While the lower set easily read coldness and determination the other set reeked of fear and betrayal.

“I apologize for what I’m about to do,” Hannibal calmly whispered as he took one of Will’s limp hands, “But it must be done. You won’t remember this– or at least will forget for some time. If and when this moment returns to you, please understand that this is not punishment by any means. Please understand that I will lie to you about her death and your hand in it, but it is not for my own selfish gains. I will have to rob you of a great deal of things in order to keep her safe. Your pain protects Abigail. I hope you realize that, and forgive me mano širdis.”

Hannibal took the hand that he was holding and kissed it before he stood. He grabbed the clear tube and looked at Will one last time. He wiped away a tear that had escaped before he shut Will’s eyes.

“Joks dievas man neatleis, bet meldžiu, kad tu tai atleis.” Hannibal muttered to himself before forced Will’s mouth open and began to shove the tube down his throat.

—---------

Will jolted forward in the wooden chair and almost fell into Chilton. His right hand gripped his chest as he desperately gasped for air. His left hand found his throat and he frantically moved his mouth in any way that he could. He was back in the office. He was no longer paralyzed or drugged with fancy tea. He was closer to safety now.

“Welcome back.” Chilton slyly said, “How was it?”

“No better than last time.” Will replied between gasps.

“What’d you see?” Chilton asked as he stood and pulled his chair back to its rightful place beside his desk.

“Jumping straight to it I see,” Will muttered as he slowly stood as well, “Just Hannibal. It’s always Hannibal.”

Chilton frowned as he sat back in his chair. He let out a loud sigh, "Anything else? Any details?"

Will didn't answer immediately. He had a choice to make now, and both were equally influential on multiple lives.

He could tell Chilton the truth. He saw Hannibal sever Abigail's ear and quite literally stuff it down his throat. It was a bold choice to make, but it would be a choice that could potentially save his own life. The truth could save him from the trial and the death sentence, but it would most likely damn both Hannibal and Abigail. And while he hated Hannibal enough to damn him, the same could not be said for Abigail Hobbs. He only had one other choice.

"You don't want the details." Will responded at last.

"Oh. Lovely." Chilton commented, "In that case you're free to leave. You know the drill: knock on the door three times and Matthew will take you back. Shoo."

Will steadily made his way to the door and knocked lightly three times like he was told. The doorknob shaked and rattled before it unlocked and revealed Matthew in the doorway. Matthew took Will by the arm and escorted him back to the cell. While they walked Will Graham wanted to return himself to the innermost center of his mind, but with the drug worn off it once again was blocked off to him. Instead he was forced to take in the bland walls of the bland hospital. The only thing that stood out was Matthew's smile in the darkness of the hallway they walked down. The whole building had become too small for Will, and he was starting to become claustrophobic.

When they arrived at the cell Will entered with no restraint or protest. He didn't try to escape or steal keys. Instead he watched the man in white lock his cell and trap him in the small space for yet another night.

"Can I ask a favor?" Will asked as Matthew set the freshly used key ring back at his side.

“Anything.” the smiling man replied.

“Could you let Frederick know that I’d like to see Hannibal?”

Matthew’s smile slowly faded, “Of course.”

The man in white turned and left before Will could properly thank him. He was once again alone in the dark cell in the dark hospital.

Will decided that it was late and laid himself across the small bed in his cell. Both the stiff bed and the coarse fabric of his uniform did nothing to welcome the concept of sleep. Then again, nothing Will had or did ever warranted sleep. All he could do was stare at the ceiling and think about Hannibal.

He understood why Hannibal did what he did; Will had an empathy disorder he had no choice other than to understand. However, it did not stop the rage from boiling in his chest once more. He hated Hannibal before, but not how he loathed the man. He may not be able to kill the man, but he had no struggle when it came to fantasizing about the day he finally followed through and ended Hannibal’s life.

He’d kill the man with his hands. He wouldn’t rely on a gun or a knife to cut his life short; that would be a mercy he didn’t deserve. It would be slow, excruciatingly painful, and even *intimate* . The Chesapeake Ripper deserved no less.

He simply couldn’t wait for Hannibal Lecter to die.

The Truth Veiled

The light tapping of expensive shoes echoed down the hall. They grew closer and closer and therefore louder and louder. The taps came routinely as if each step were carefully planned before they were carried out. And with each carefully planned tapping of a foot against the cold floor Will became more and more uneasy. Hannibal Lecter was coming to his cell and there was no stopping it. Will made the choice to request his presence that night, and he must now live with the consequences of his rash decision.

This visiting cell was much different than the others he had been in before. There were no bars or marked tape to label how close the visitors could get to him. There would be no required distance that could save him from Hannibal. His husband could come as close as he'd like to him and nothing could stop it. And unlike the others, this cell felt more like a room. Chilton had this room carefully stashed away for a special occasion, it was obvious. He assumed that the special occasion in question would be his upcoming interaction with Doctor Lecter. Either he wanted to further experiment on the Encephalitis, or he simply had an unhealthy fascination with Will's complex relations with Hannibal. If the latter of the two was the case, then perhaps he and Freddie Lounds would be friends.

Will was loosely chained to the wall. The length of the chain on his ankle gave him the freedom to wander around the "room", but it didn't give him the freedom to leave. Just like he was in any other cell, Will was trapped. He could look at the double sided mirror up close before he tried to shatter it. He could throw his full weight against the door in front of him. He could rip the table and chairs from their bolts in the ground and knock out the guards with the keys. He could do anything he wanted to and in the room except leave; the chain on his ankle serving as yet another reminder that he was a fallen angel in the depths of hell as a result of Hannibal Lecter's scheme.

Will sat on the only sofa in the room. He could feel himself sinking into it like it was made with him in mind. It had been so long since Will felt the softness of a proper cushion. The bed he slept on each night in his cell resembled a rock more than it did a mattress. The chairs he sat in were simple and made of steel. Chilton wouldn't allow him comfort in any form.

However, he gave it willingly to Will now. It was clear Frederick Chilton had some form of motive behind such kindness, but Will didn't care. He'd endure a thousand years of Hannibal's supervised and recorded visits if it meant he could stay in the comfort of the small sofa.

Will laid his head against the arm of the couch as he listened to the fumbling of keys by the door in front of him. He knew that soon he would once again have to put up the walls he laid out. When the man entered the room Will could no longer enjoy the peace of the sofa or the silence of the room. He would be forced back on guard, and no couch cushions could bring him serenity then.

And just as he expected, the door opened and Will shot himself up onto his feet. The devil emerged from the same door wearing his usual three piece suit. However, the suit didn't hold its usual array of colors. What might've been red and gray or blue and yellow on his suit had been replaced with a simple maroon. It seemed that the devil was embracing his evil instead of hiding it now.

The door was slammed shut and locked behind them. Will was now stuck in a room with the Chesapeake Ripper.

"Will." Hannibal said calmly as he kept his overcoat folded over his left arm.

"Hannibal." Will replied as he sat back down on the couch. He patted the other cushion next to him, "I think it's time we finally talked man to man. It's been too long."

A light smirk grew on Hannibal's face before he accepted Will's offer and the space next to him.

"I must say, a loveseat is quite fitting. Perhaps Doctor Chilton has the slightest bit of taste, don't you believe so?" Hannibal commented as he laid his overcoat on the arm of the seat.

What was a simple attempt to break the thick layer of ice between them went unnoticed. The tension was still thick enough for Hannibal to smell. He could tell even without his eyes that Will was unhappy, and it was even more obvious that the tension was directed into anger that he would later be faced with. Hannibal wished he could say he was surprised by this observation, but then again he knew who he married. Will was a rightfully angry man, so it seemed only fair that he accepted that. 'For better or worse' they had said at the altar. And though this certainly went beyond the 'worse' that they vowed to, Hannibal would accept it all the same.

“I don’t want to hear anymore about Frederick Chilton,” Will snapped as he looked away from Hannibal and out at another wall, “it’s bad enough I have to see him every day, I don’t want to hear about him too.”

“My apologies,” Hannibal replied as he watched Will put his elbow against the arm of the couch and then red his head in his palm, “what would you have us discuss then? Why have I been called to you mylimasis?”

“Have you ever read the book 1984?” Will blurted out.

“I’ve read a great deal of novels in my life,” Hannibal answered, suspecting a purpose behind the random comment, “but indulge me with the premise to refresh my memory.”

“‘Big Brother is watching.’” Will replied as he briefly looked at Hannibal before rejoining his head in his hand. He would not allow Chilton the satisfaction of understanding their conversation.

Hannibal nodded in understanding. The phrase felt similar to a suspicion that was confirmed at last. Though the cameras were hidden from the naked eye, they still existed within the room. Frederick Chilton, if he was not actively watching them, was at least recording them. Their words would have to be chosen carefully.

“Ah, I remember now. Do you think that Winston was named with the novel in mind?” Hannibal asked in order to keep the conversation flowing. To switch the topic so suddenly would make Chilton aware of their double meanings and see through them.

“I doubt it. There’s many Winstons in the world. Maybe just as many as there are lying and backstabbing husbands. Wouldn’t you agree *darling?* ” Will snarled, finally revealing the intention behind his call for Hannibal.

“Whatever do you mean mylimasis?”

“Marriages have been built on lies since men could tell stories. Did you think Acrisus’s wife knew that he had forced Danae and Perseus out onto the open sea, or did he make her believe that her daughter was dead? Did Lucius Virginius truly kill Virginia, or was he framed because his wife handed him the dagger with his daughter’s blood still on it?” Will questioned as he finally turned to face Hannibal.

His eyes were locked on Hannibal. Between the accusatory tone and the piercing eyes locked on him, it was the one time he didn’t want Will to look at him.

“They had their reasons,” Hannibal replied quickly, his accent thick with emotion, “Though the myths don’t do them justice, they still had their reasons for their heinous crimes against those they loved.”

“That doesn’t erase the crime or the pain it caused Hannibal.”

“No, it does not,” Hannibal added, “but perhaps it could warrant forgiveness.”

“They have to be worthy of it. They must make up for their mistakes. It doesn’t come automatically.” Will explained, his face still stone cold.

“And how would you have them do so?” Hannibal asked.

“They can’t undo the pain that was caused. The daughters can never be brought back into the light.” WIll elucidated, “but perhaps they could ease the pain they have caused. Perhaps, they can make that suffering just the slightest bit easier to bear.”

Hannibal nodded and stood. He paced around the room with a closed hand to his lips. Will watched him lost in deep thought. He was always so full of elegance and grace, yet it both had been abandoned to focus all his attention into his mind. The gears were churning and grinding against each other as he schemed. Despite the dialed back sense of sophistication there was still a curly brunette who watched him for a few moments in awe.

Though Will hated the man he was still capable of recognizing beauty when he saw it.

However, he couldn't gape or stare for too long. It would make Chilton suspicious. He had to direct Hannibal's attention back onto him and away from his plan to win back Will's affection. He hated Hannibal more than he hated anything in his life, but he had to protect him from the watchful eye on them. If he didn't then there would be a chance that Abigail Hobbs takes his place in the cell. And while he had feelings towards him that were too complex to describe, there was always the certainty that he needed to protect Abigail.

"Hannibal.." Will softly called as he tried to hide any sense of loathing that he had towards the man, "Just sit down."

Hannibal snapped out of his own head and looked at Will with confusion. The man hadn't been anything short of furious the moment before, but now his eyes seemed to beg for him. Hannibal was slightly reluctant to sit; there was a possibility that it was a set up to finally finish the doctor off with the loose chain around him. However, after a moment of hesitance, Hannibal eagerly sat back down next to Will. He could never seem to stay away from Will even when he knew it was best to never look back at him.

Hannibal was careful. He didn't lay a finger on Will or even look in his direction. He made no movements or attempts to defend his actions. He simply sat in the chair and watched the space in front of him.

"I don't want to stay here anymore." Will finally said at last.

"I know you don't." Hannibal softly replied as he tilted his right palm upwards for Will to take. He watched as Will debated with himself for a moment before he accepted it. The hands of two killers intertwined in silent understanding.

"I don't want to stay here anymore." Will repeated, this time his voice ringing through Hannibal's head with its second meaning, "I want to go back."

"I'm afraid we cannot do that Will." Hannibal began as he gently pulled Will closer to him by their intertwined hands, "There is no going back. Time cannot reverse."

“We could try. I’d like to try it with you. We could reverse it.” Will pleaded as he rested his head against the padded shoulder of Hannibal’s suit.

Will loathed the man. He hated him. The man had carefully diced all of his relationships into isolated cubes. He separated the onion from the dirt that it thrived in and then put it through a blender. Since he found himself in prison he had been actively working towards his downfall. He had even asked Beverly and Freddie to investigate Hannibal on his behalf. He doubted that Freddie actually did, but he knew that Beverly was carrying out his request. He was grateful that she was because it meant he would be able to imprison him without destroying what he built for Abigail. Yet, despite it all, he found himself begging to go back in time with him. He hated Hannibal, but he wanted to go back to that fateful day in his office. The complexity of their shared kiss seemed so simple and mundane now. He missed when there was nothing beyond them. Will would give anything just to go back to that office or the cabin with him.

“Occasionally, I drop a teacup to shatter on the floor on purpose. I’m not satisfied when it doesn’t gather itself up again. Someday, perhaps, that cup will come together, but it will never be the same as it once was. If the teacup came together again then the cracks would still be visible on the fine china. We can only watch it come crashing down onto the cold ground once. We cannot pretend the teacup is not a shattered ghost of what it once was. However, if we both are willing, the teacup can still hold the tea we pour into it. We both can still drink from its shattered remains. Why abandon the teacup or replace it? It is not perfect. It is a flawed cup. It is a cup doomed to remain flawed no matter how we try to fix it. The best choice is to accept the cracks and scars of the teacup and move forward, not try to reverse the damage done.”

The truth of his words pierced Will like another knife in his flesh. He hated the way that Hannibal was right. Though he ached to go back, there was no way to. They were forever locked in a dance together with no way out. Their fates had been sealed and the string of their lives had been intertwined just like their hands were.

Will felt Hannibal’s right hand as it was replaced by his left. He could feel that same right hand as it wrapped around Will in an embrace. He hated the man, but the feeling of his touch always seemed to melt his worries away as quickly as his presence could cause worry.

He loved to hate Hannibal. That part was always easy. It came naturally. He could hate a man for his lies and his deceit without struggle. He could hate the killer for his crimes. His

husband was an easy man to hate, and it came easily to Will. However, he hated to love him. He always wondered if he loved the man or simply empathized with him in a deeper manner than he was used to. And while he hated Hannibal, he still found himself melting into the man. And despite that hate the smoothness of his voice still managed to lull Will into a peaceful state.

"How do we fix this?" Will asked at last.

"I don't know for certain. I've never been married before, but one can assume it doesn't occur automatically. Perhaps we simply take things one day at a time." Hannibal answered as lightly pulled Will closer, "The first step is to prove to you that I'm worthy of your forgiveness. From there– I will help you learn to trust me again. I'll prove that my first priority is you– our *family.* That is, of course, if you'd want my help then."

"Please Hannibal," Will whispered with his head now against his husband's chest, "help me."

Hannibal nodded and placed a soft kiss on his head, "Of course. Anything you desire mylimasis."

For the first time the two men held each other with real desire. Their embrace was not part of an ulterior motive. They did not take the other's hand as part of an escape plan. There was no betrayal among the two now, only understanding. There was no flashing of red and blue lights or wailing of sirens. There were no guns to either of their heads or knives in each other's backs. They were simply together. For the first time since they met they held each other with no intention outside of their desire to vanquish their bottled hostility towards the other. This simple moment, though the words were never spoken, seemed to be an apology to each other for the cruelties they both had endured. Hannibal saw this as his own apology and love confession towards the brunette. The brunette saw it as an apology and his first step towards acceptance. It seemed now as if they finally aligned as both husbands and accomplices. It was all Will ever needed. Perhaps there was hope for them and their teacup after all.

That was assuming he could call off Beverly's investigation into Hannibal of course.

Trial Testimonies

Chapter Summary

Trigger Warning List!!!

-mentions of mutilation
-mentions of gunfire
-mention of murder

Will hated suits. The way they highlighted his muscular form and provided a sense of elegance to the rugged man was not highly favored. He loathed when he put the suits on because they reminded him so much of his husband. When he was allowed a glimpse through any reflective surface he often found Hannibal facing him instead of himself. It was bad enough that he agreed to attempt forgiveness despite the anger coursing through his veins. It was even worse that the man's voice could be heard and his face always seen even after he left. The worst part would always be the way he saw Hannibal when he was supposed to see himself. His existence had become an extension of Hannibal's now.

"The bride of fucking Frankenstein." he muttered to himself as he tightened his tie.

"I'm sorry?" Leonard Brauner, Will's defense attorney, asked in reply.

"Oh.. sorry." Will answered, "Just talking to myself."

"Ok. Just don't do that in court."

Will nodded in understanding, "So, Alana is taking the stand for me today?"

"About that," Brauner began, "There's been a change of plans."

“Oh?”

Will’s cell was opened and he was permitted to exit. He did exactly that. He stepped away from the iron bars of his cell and made his way to his attorney’s side.

“There have been some developments in your case. I won’t disclose them because the jury will be looking to you for a raw reaction. If you’re aware you will look guilty. You need to look as shocked as the rest of them.” the attorney explained as he and Will began to walk, “Besides, the person taking the stand for you will be quite the uproar as it is. I mean, considering he’s your secret husband and all.”

“Did you just say Hannibal Lecter is taking the stand?” Will whispered, fury hidden behind his tongue.

“Yes. He can serve as both a character witness and a professional opinion. He’s well regarded for his lack of bias in any given situation. Plus, he has close knowledge of both you and the cases you were involved in. He’s the ideal witness.”

“And how did you manage to get him on the stand?”

“Actually, he came to me. Said he had a change of heart or something like that.”

“Damnit Hannibal.” Will muttered as they reached the door to the courtroom, “I need to speak with him.”

“I’m sorry, you can’t. If anyone got word of it they’ll accuse you both of manipulating the trial or the evidence.”

“So I could throw the whole trial just for speaking with my husband? Seems a bit extreme don’t you think?”

“Trust me I agree. It’s just we’re trying to prove your innocence here. We can’t do anything that would jeopardize that. Which in this case means we have to separate you two. Have him visit you afterwards.”

Will groaned in response. Before he could reply the door was held open for him and he made his way into the eyes of his judge and jury. He looked around the room at the people who would decide his fate. His life was in their hands. There was no way to avoid it. All he could do was take his seat and hope his jury was merciful.

When he sat he continued to look around the room. Hannibal Lecter was nowhere to be found. Neither was Alana Bloom. Will’s chest seemed to tighten at the sight— or rather the lack of it. Will couldn’t help but feel like this was part of yet another scheme. Whether it was to further screw Will’s chances at freedom or to put Alana Bloom in his pocket was unknown, but either way nothing good could come from the man’s absence.

The roar of conversation within the room was quickly silenced by the pounding of the gavel. Everyone took their seats and all eyes were on Will Graham. It was showtime.

“The defense calls Doctor Hannibal Lecter to the stand.” boomed Will’s attorney.

The doors across the judge’s stand flung open and the devil in a three piece suit emerged. He walked swiftly with confidence and grace like no other. Perhaps it was the simple gray suit combined with the deep red tie that made his arrogance appear more secluded as he made his way to the stand, or maybe he was trying to hide it on purpose. Either way, Will sensed the difference in the man. Even when Hannibal sat at the witness stand and placed his hand over a Bible he did not believe in, Will felt his stomach turn.

This was wrong. His presence and influence on this trial was wrong. He was risking everything just to testify on Will’s behalf. Hannibal could incriminate him further. Hannibal, with one misstep, could turn the torches and pitchforks towards himself. His presence at the stand put Abigail at risk. Leave it to the monster to destroy everything they built in an attempt to have everything.

Will looked at his attorney, who gave him a light squeeze of the hand in reassurance before he made his way to Hannibal. Will’s eyes trailed his attorney for a moment before they wandered to Hannibal.

When his eyes met Hannibal's, the man did not appear the same. Instead of seeing his peach skin he found blackness. His hair once more had been replaced with the dark antlers. His suit remained and his cold neutral expression pierced Will all the same. Will snapped his eyes shut for a moment, and when his eyes opened again he found the man instead of the beast from his nightmares.

“Doctor Lecter, how do you know the defendant?” Brauner asked as he approached the stand.

“He’s my husband, and above all my friend.” Hannibal replied, his eyes not wavering from Will.

“How did you two meet?”

“We both were consulted during the Minnesota Shrike case. Jack Crawford made us his search dogs, and we both were quite skilled with it.”

“Uh huh. And he killed the suspect– Garrett Jacob Hobbs was it?” Brauner asked. Hannibal nodded, “You were there when the defendant shot him. Describe the scene to me.”

“He was hesitant with the gun. Garrett Jacob Hobbs had just killed his wife and was pressing the same blade against his daughter’s neck. He didn’t want to fire out of fear. He didn’t want to risk Abigail Hobb’s life. Only when it was apparent that her father had no intention of sparing her did he fire the gun. Mister Hobbs slit her throat just as he fired. He and I worked to save her life, or rather I did. He was too panicked to be of much help.” Hannibal explained as he finally faced Brauner.

“Describe his relationship with Abigail Hobbs after these events.”

Hannibal took a breath, “He was protective of her, we both were. He felt a sense of guilt for ripping her family from her. When she was in the hospital I often found him at her bedside.

During our weekly talks he would often mention a sense of duty to her. He did not seem the type to cause a girl he viewed as his own pain."

"But you told Mister Crawford that you believed that he would cause harm to her when they both disappeared to her old home."

"I did, but I was incorrect. At the time of her disappearance she was believed to be an accomplice in her father's murders along with being responsible for the death of Nick Boyle. When Will heard the news he was shattered. Given his instability as a result of that case it became too easy to assume he was searching for blood over answers."

"What changed your mind?"

"I was asked to consult on another case. The evidence combined with the profile created was almost identical to those in which Will was accused of." Hannibal answered, his voice cold.

Will raised a brow in confusion. He knew that he was purposely kept in the dark for the authenticity of his facial expressions, but he expected something smaller and less significant than another case proving his innocence. Hannibal purposely catered his crimes to Will Graham. Each detail was meant to point to him. Unless Hannibal created another in order to free him, he didn't understand the relevance.

If Hannibal did, however, create another scene for him then he couldn't help but be grateful. Eyes were on them both now. And while Will had the uproar, there would always still be eyes on the spouses of the accused. People are often intrigued by how the spouses react and behave as a result of such straining situations. It would take great skill to escape those eyes and forge Will's freedom.

"Describe the scene to me."

"The victim was found mutilated and impaled, which was almost identical to the victims Will stands accused of murdering. Such alarming similarities cannot help but raise questions about Mister Graham's involvement in their deaths."

“Do you think he killed the listed victims?” Brauner blatantly asked

“No.” Hannibal replied.

“Your witness.” Brauner called to the prosecutor before he took his seat beside Will.

Marion Vega, the prosecutor, stood in response. She grabbed her small notebook full of frantically scribbled words and slowly approached both Hannibal and the witness stand.

“Doctor Lecter I must admit at first I didn’t expect you to have such a close relationship with Mister Graham.” Vega began, “There was no evidence of the relationship besides a marriage certificate. There wasn’t even evidence of a wedding. Why? Was it the fact that he was your patient prior to his incarceration?”

“He never was my official patient. I asked him to clarify or confirm whether our relationship was platonic or professional on several occasions. He confirmed it was platonic, which made me capable of accepting his advances. As for the wedding, Mister Graham is not the social type so I refused to torture him with a full ceremony and reception. We eloped.”

“And why did you two elope so quickly? After all, you two haven’t known each other for longer than a year. Seems a bit suspicious don’t you think?”

“There were a variety of reasons. We both had been romantically and sexually involved for quite some time. In my home country we married much quicker than people do in America. Will, after discovering this, had proposed the marriage to me over dinner in my home. It was out of respect for my culture and passionate desire that we agreed to wed as quickly as we did. As we were planning our elopement he also explained to me that he also wanted someone else to rely on if the cases he was involved in finally took a toll. He knew Jack Crawford’s demands would not end well, and he knew that having me at his side to handle matters if he no longer could would be beneficial. He knew that Jack would push him until he broke, so he wanted a spouse to assume both medical and financial conservatorship.”

“So he appointed you to ultimately control his affairs because he felt himself becoming Mister Hobbs.”

“No, it was simply a precaution he made when Jack Crawford pressured him into remaining involved with his cases. He knew it wouldn’t end well for him if he stayed, so he ultimately surrendered control to me in order to prevent events like this from happening.”

“Hm.” Vega added, “but you do love him, correct?”

“More than anything in this life and the next.” Hannibal replied as his eyes met Will’s again.

“My eyes are here Doctor. You aren’t on the stand to confess your love to your husband.” She snapped, which forced Hannibal’s eyes back to her.

“My apologies.”

“Anyways,” the prosecutor continued, “Do you love him enough to lie for him? Are you willing to risk your life to keep his?”

“Without hesitation.” Hannibal quickly answered.

Will couldn’t help but slap his hand against his head and drag it down his face in annoyance.

“Fuck.” Brauner muttered just loud enough for Will alone to hear.

“And what was the cause of death with the case you consulted on?”

“A fatal gunshot to the heart.”

“So the victim was impaled and mutilated after his death.” Vega assumed.

“Yes. However, no crime scene is identical. The victim could have resisted and gave the true perpetrator no other choice.”

“But each victim of Will Graham’s was impaled while they were still alive. What were the causes of death with your husband’s victims?”

“Mutilation and impalement.”

Marion Vega turned her attention away from Lecter and towards the judge, “Your honor, I would like to have Doctor Lecter’s testimony stricken from the record.”

The judge nodded, “Granted. Doctor Lecter’s testimony will be stricken from the record.” The judge looked to the court stenographer, who met the judge with a nod, “Doctor Lecter, you’re free to leave the stand.”

Hannibal slowly rose from his seat at the witness stand and made his way to an empty seat at the back of the courtroom.

“I take it we’re back at square one?” Will sarcastically commented; already knowing the answer.

—------

“WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING HANNIBAL?!” Will shouted, his words echoing through his small cell, “YOU CAN’T BE CARELESS LIKE THAT! TOO MUCH IS ON THE LINE. LIVES ARE AT STAKE!”

“Our stray is safe. I ensured that before I took the stand.”

“Our *stray?* She’s not a dog Hannibal!” Will yelled as he threw his hands in the air with anger.

“Would you prefer I use her name?” Hannibal asked in reply, his voice clearly struggling to remain monotone.

Will sighed, his anger slightly soothed, “You’re right, but there’s better names. How about ‘dove’ or ‘hawk’ instead?”

“Hawks, despite being overlooked, are quite ferocious birds.” Hannibal commented.

“Hawk it is then.” Will added, “Now please explain to me why you would take the stand for me?”

Hannibal softly answered, “Someone presented us with an opportunity, and I promised to help you.”

“Not every dead body is an opportunity– wait.” Will, who had been pacing around the room, stopped in his tracks and slowly approached the iron bars, “That wasn’t you?”

Hannibal stared at him, slightly offended by the question, “That is quite a sick attempt at a joke mylimasis.”

Hannibal stepped closer to the bars, their faces almost pressed together. Only the bars separated their bodies from each other, “I wouldn’t be that careless. If it were me you’d be seated at my table by now.”

“So who was it then?”

“I don’t know,” Hannibal answered, “but we do know that you have an admirer. Doctor Chilton, while you and I were not on speaking terms, had been examining your mail. You received about eight packages containing various parts of the head.”

“What?”

“We’ve counted about five ears, one tongue, and a pair of eyes,” Hannibal continued.

“Have you talked to Bev about checking it for fingerprints?” Will questioned as he took a step back from the bars.

“Naturally. I brought it to her for investigation. She seemed suspicious of me, but she agreed. She found nothing. Whoever your admirer is wishes to stay anonymous.”

“Of course.” Will groaned as he stepped up to the bars again, “Thanks anyway I guess.”

“Anything for you, mylimasis.” Hannibal cooed in reply as he took Will’s right hand and pulled it through the bars and closer to him. He knew that Chilton would be livid if he saw the two married men with their hands intertwined, but he didn’t care. Today would be his last visit with Will Graham anyways. He brought the hand to his lips and gently laid a kiss upon it before gently releasing it.

“Chilton might kill you for that.” Will joked as he took that hand and grabbed the bar,

“Let him try. Better men have tried and failed.” Hannibal slyly remarked in reply. Will lightly chuckled in response.

“Things were simpler then.” Will added.

“I know,” Hannibal commented, “they will be simple again soon. I swear to you we will have the simplicity of our lives returned to us.”

“Our lives have never really been simple, darling.” Will replied, the nickname slipping out despite his restraint.

“Perhaps the word *simpler* will better describe it,” Hannibal corrected, “but to do so I’ll have to leave you.”

“I know,” Will answered, “when will you be back?”

“I fear that day will not occur. Instead, you’ll find yourself seated at my table once more. I can promise that.”

Will nodded in understanding. He knew that he should be relieved by Hannibal leaving, but he couldn’t help but dread it. Hannibal’s absence would mean he would be truly alone within his personal prison. Though it would be temporary, he knew it would be unbearable.

“Goodbye, mylimasis.” Hannibal said coldly as he stepped back from the bars.

As he took a step Will reached through the bars and grabbed Hannibal’s crimson tie. He yanked at it, forcing Hannibal forward and into the bars that attempted to separate them. And just as Hannibal’s body hit the bars Will crashed his lips against Hannibal’s.

It was electric. Passion coursed through their veins and resparked a dying flame between them. Their lips had finally found each other and not even the air surrounding them could keep them apart. It had been far too long since they allowed themselves to express the desires they worked so hard to bury. And with their newfound contact they reaffirmed their complete and utter devotion to each other.

Will, while still gripping the tie, used his free hand to grab a fistful of Hannibal’s neatly styled hair and use it to usher him even closer. Will wanted to test just how close they could

be with iron bars between them.

Hannibal didn't mind surrendering control to Will. In a way, he had always been in control of Hannibal Lecter. Every step he took was made with Will Graham in mind. He couldn't think of anything without it circling back to Will. He was yet another stray that Will had added to his ever-growing pack. And like his dogs, Hannibal was forever loyal to his disheveled and deranged brunette.

Will released Hannibal from his grasp as he puffed and panted for air. The tie was dropped and found its place against Hannibal's dress shirt once more. He tucked the tie into his suit again and tried his best to smoothen the hair that Will had messed with. He knew that if he didn't leave soon he would face the consequences of his disregard for Frederick Chilton's rules.

"Aš tave myliu, ir mes susitiksime ten, kur mus dar kartą apšvies šviesa." Hannibal cooed before he backed away from his husband's cell. After a moment he turned his back to him; the pain of facing him as they separated was intolerable.

As he escaped the wrath of Chilton and slid into his car he made mental notes. It seemed that by meeting with Will after the trial he had added to his long list of chores he must endure. He would return home first. Will's paranoia made Hannibal worried for Abigail's safety. Hannibal would return home to her and ensure that his scrapped testimony did not cost her what remained of her life. Perhaps he would even prepare a meal for her if his mood changed by the time he reached her.

After that, he had a judge he needed to provide retribution to.

The Lure

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning List

-captivity
-murder
-violence
-mention of self harm
-mention of suicide

If the last two are something you struggle with, know you are not alone! Mwah my lovelies

It had been too long since Abigail set foot outside her new home. She was no prisoner; she was free to leave whenever she wanted as long as she remained unspotted. However, she refused to take the risk. She knew Hannibal wanted it that way. The illusion of freedom was created to keep her in his grasp; she knew that yet she didn't resist. She even dared to embrace it. He preferred her cage to be prettier than the iron bars that were planned for her.

The time she spent alone in the house at first was maddening. She was too afraid to leave her assigned bedroom and too nervous to explore. She found herself doing nothing more than sleeping or staring at the ceiling as her thoughts raced to a place much safer. As the days passed she found the courage to explore her vast cell. She found small freedoms and liberties within her prison. She found movies that she never watched before. She found books that she was yet to read. She made ways to entertain herself. Whether it was by reading or forging music on Hannibal's piano didn't matter to her. As long as she kept herself busy she wouldn't entirely see the iron bars hidden within the walls.

Today was different. She had grown bored of reading the Greek Myths and could not bear to watch Nosferatu or Frankenstein again; she had memorized the words within them by now. Instead, she decided to make the most of other rooms within his house. He wasn't home, so there was no one to object.

She found that his kitchen had found a large collection of various recipes in various languages stashed away in a leather binder within a corner cabinet. She pulled it from its

resting place and blew the dust to uncover the cursive words that were carefully embroidered by hand onto it. “For Misha” it read in English. Abigail had never heard the name before, especially not from Hannibal. She didn’t know who Mischa was. If he knew the name on the binder at all, he never spoke of it. Perhaps she was a love from another life or a lost family member that he held close to his heart once. Maybe she was a wife or a daughter that he had long before he became the devil. It was a possibility that this woman, Mischa, had seen Hannibal with the halo and the soft feathers of wings instead of the darkness of the horns that sprouted within him. And perchance, the recipes within the binder made for her was his way of honoring her. Or worse, it was his way of consuming her again.

Abigail set the closed leather binder down onto the counter and retreated for a moment into the living room. She found Hannibal’s ipad resting on a dark brown coffee table with the white charger connected to it. She ripped the wire from the ipad and brought it with her into the kitchen. She laid it beside the binder and turned it on with a simple tap of the small circle button. The light shined brightly into her eyes, the image of Florence in the form of an old renaissance painting glaring back at her. With another tap of the button the image disappeared and the device was unlocked. She quickly found the first search engine that Hannibal kept downloaded and opened it. She slid the ipad further to the left and opened the binder. She found a recipe that seemed to have less words than the other and began to type each of the foreign words into the ipad. The language, which she later discovered was Lithuanian, described a simple dish to her. She skimmed the newly translated recipe and pulled various ingredients onto the counter alongside it. It was about time she finally learned to cook.

She decided that her curiosity was yet to be satisfied, so she ventured into the basement for the meat that would accompany the dish. She was told frequently that it was preferred that she never made her way down the steps, but she didn’t listen. Instead, she compromised with Hannibal’s command by simply grabbing a chunk of flesh from the basement fridge and carrying the perfect packaging back up as quickly as she could. Hopefully he wouldn’t mind. It’s not like the packaging advertised who it was Abigail was cooking after all.

Just as she removed the thin plastic wrap from the “pork” she heard the sound of keys being pressed into the door. He was home.

She quickly wrapped the meat back up and placed it into the fridge, and then put everything on the kitchen counter exactly where she found it. And just as the door peered open Abigail sprawled herself along the nearest couch and pretended to be in a very light slumber.

The man stepped inside and immediately shut the door behind him without a glance into the house. The way he held himself always showed Abigail that he was confident in himself. He

never expected to be caught. He never expected an ambush or an attempt on his life. If there was one, he knew he would slaughter every last one of them like clueless lambs. He would compare the screaming of the lambs to that of Mozart or Chopin and take pleasure in it until death held his hand over their wailing mouths. He wouldn't care for the names of his lambs. Whether they went by the names Alana, Will, Freddie, Abigail, or even Mischa, it wouldn't matter. It should be a terrifying thing to know, but the girl with the scar on her neck found comfort in it. He reminded her of a more elegant version of her father, and there would always be comfort in familiarity.

Abigail peaked an eye open to see him, and found his eyes were red; most likely from tears. His suit was neat but it wasn't at its usual perfection. He looked sad, heartbroken even. It appeared that this visit with Will had been a difficult one. Or perhaps the trial did not go in Will's favor. Either way, Hannibal was deeply saddened by the events of the day and was struggling to keep it hidden.

"Abigail, I know you aren't asleep," Hannibal softly called as he set his overcoat on the coat rack by the door.

"You caught me." she answered as she lazily threw her hands in the air in surrender.

"What made you feel the need to hide your hobbies from me?" Hannibal asked as he went into the kitchen and wiped away a lone tear. He kept his composure and acted almost as if there were never tears in his eyes to begin with. It was almost disturbing how quickly he could change himself.

He noticed dust on the floor in the kitchen. He kept his floor spotless at all times with Abigail's help, which naturally meant that Abigail found something, "What did you do?"

"I was going to cook, or try to at least." she explained with a half smile.

Hannibal looked through the room in an attempt to find the source of the dust, "Is that why I heard the rustling? You set everything back out of fear that I would be angry with you?"

“Yeah,” she replied as she sat up, her elbow leaning against the arm of the couch, “I know how…. costly….. the meat can be.”

“It’s just meat.” Hannibal continued as he opened a cabinet and found the leather binder staring at him, “I could always get more. What matters more is your comfort and safety.”

“I guess.”

“Was this the book you were referencing with your dish?” Hannibal asked as he grabbed the binder and held it up for her to see.

“Huh?”

“Was this the book you were referencing?”

“I can’t hear you. One ear.” She commented as she stood and approached the kitchen, “One more time please.”

“Did you use this?”

“Oh.” She meekly replied, “Yeah.”

“I’d prefer that you ask to use this one in the future.” He requested within his statement.

Abigail nodded and found a seat on top of his kitchen counter.

“I didn’t realize you can read lithuanian, and Italian.” Hannibal commented as he slowly and cautiously opened the binder like it were cracked glass against an open flame.

“I can’t. Google can.” She quickly added, the smile growing back once more, only this time brighter and more full than before.

Hannibal laughed despite not entirely understanding. He was an older man and he didn’t understand who or what Google was, but he laughed out of joy for Abigail’s bright presence. She seemed so much happier away from home. Without the Minnesota Shrike the light seemed to return to her eyes. And away from her father’s killer she finally smiled warmly. The little bird that was trapped in a case finally found herself a pair of wings.

“Who’s Mischa?” Abigail asked as her smile faded into something more solemn.

Hannibal’s laughter was silenced and his smile lines turned to a frown. The eyes that had been locked so protectively and tenderly on Abigail had found a new home facing the floor. She had clearly struck a nerve by asking, though neither of them would admit it.

“My sister.” Hannibal answered after a moment.

“And where is she now?”

“In the earth that made her.” Hannibal quickly elucidated, his voice monotone and thick with his native accent.

Abigail took his left hand in both of her own, “if you don’t mind, what happened to her?”

Hannibal ripped his hand away from her and shut the binder. He turned away from the girl and set the binder back into its home once more. Abigail took the sign and slid off the counter. He wouldn’t answer. The questions that the binder raised wouldn’t all be answered today. Perhaps in time it would. Maybe one day the anxiety of the unknown could finally be resolved.

Hannibal turned back to the girl, his mouth open and ready to speak when there was a loud knock at the door that Hannibal just entered. He quickly snapped his eyes from Abigail to the basement in silent command. Abigail, the ever understanding little bird, nodded in response. She silently inched towards the basement with Hannibal trailing behind her. They slipped inside and onto the stairs and shut the door behind them just as the front door opened.

A woman mainly dressed in dark colors stepped inside. Her black hair fell just past her collarbone and seemed to accentuate her side part. Even with her burgundy leather jacket she was silent as she walked into the home uninvited. She didn't gawk at the sophisticated nature of the decor or distract herself with the piano she found. No, Beverly Katz had a mission and a duty to fulfill to her friend. She came for evidence and she wouldn't leave without it.

At first she didn't know where to look. It was evident in the way she roamed throughout the house. The man was brilliant, there wouldn't be obvious evidence simply laying around. Of course his surgical trophies existed, but it didn't mean he would simply display them like a crazed lunatic. He was too calculated and reserved for that.

However, after roaming through the house that she assumed was empty, she decided to check the obvious locations. She opened the oven and checked the pantry. Nothing was marinating for tonight's lonesome feast. Naturally, she rummaged through his freezer instead. Nothing again. She debated opening the fridge. She was met with nothing in the other two places. The odds of the evidence being in her favor now was slim. However, she decided to test Lady Luck by pulling the fridge handle open.

A piece of off-colored meat laid front and center before her next to lettuce and fresh thyme.

"Gotcha." She whispered to herself.

Hannibal and Abigail could hear her realization; they were right below her feet.

"Shit!" Abigail aggressively whispered to herself as she began to pace around the room. Her hand gripped the bridge of her nose in frustration as Hannibal stood and listened to Beverly. While Abigail panicked, Hannibal planned. There were three ways in which the next events could be carried out. In every scenario, only two of the three people walked away free. Hannibal refused to let Beverly be one of those two.

“Abigail,” He softly began, “I need to ask something horrible of you.”

“No. Don’t. Please no.” Abigail begged, her eyes beginning to water at the thought. She knew what he wanted before he even had to ask.

“I’m sorry Abigail, but we all must do things against our morals for the sake of survival.” Hannibal persisted.

“I don’t want to be bait again.” Abigail pleaded as she took Hannibal’s hand, the tears flowing like a flood that broke the dam, “Please don’t make me do it again. I don’t want to be the lure.”

“It’s her or us Abigail. I’d like for it to be us instead of her.” Hannibal calmly replied as he pulled her into a hug.

For a moment the lure cried into the line. She could feel the thick string pulling her back into the water after promising it would never happen. Abigail was a worm on a hook; no matter how hard she squirmed or slithered around the metal that pierced her she knew there would be no escape. There would only be different lines that kept her hooked. No beautiful cage was worth being used to lure in the fish. She sobbed into Hannibal knowing that despite every resistance she would find herself back in the water and luring the fish to their demise.

Hannibal kept his arms wrapped around her as she cried. He knew he was asking something almost impossible of her. She lost everything in hopes she would never have to be bait again. She gave her blood, her sweat, her tears for it. Her ear was forced down Will’s throat in the name of freedom. She sacrificed her home and her life for nothing.

“No more. This is my last time.” Abigail murmured as she pulled away from Hannibal and wiped away her tears.

“Never again. I swear to you.” Hannibal agreed.

Abigail nodded and made her way to the stairs. The door was shut, but she knew Hannibal didn't bother with making it soundproof. Why would he? Anyone who entered his basement was dead anyways. She stopped at the bottom of the stairs and took a deep breath.

"Is– Is someone there?" Abigail loudly cried out, forcing the exaggerated sound of sniffling and crying so the person on the floor above could hear her, "Please! Get me out of here! Help me please!"

The creaking above Hannibal's head stopped in their tracks. He could faintly hear the shutting of his fridge and the tapping of feet; most likely to face the direction of the sound. The fish had found the bait, all that was left was to hook her.

As Abigail continued to cry and beg for a savior the tapping against the floor distanced from him and came closer to Abigail. The closer the steps got to the stairs the further away Abigail went from them. She at one point screamed, whined, and even cursed in order to keep an interest in her performance. She was a skilled woman when it came to getting the fish hooked onto the line, but she hated the way the blood of the hook often found its way onto her instead of the line.

The door that led to the basement opened and a light shined into the dark oak stairs. She cautiously took a foot and placed it gently onto the first step, and was greeted with silence. The tan woman repeated her actions, always checking for sound before she stepped further and further into the mouth of the venus fly trap. When she reached the bottom she was met with silence. The little bird had stopped chirping for freedom and the worm stopped squirming out of knowledge for what came next.

Beverly continued further into the room; abandoning the stairs that easily would have guided her to freedom. The door of opportunity had shut for Katz. She was locked in a dance with death now. It was only a matter of time before Abigail and the Chesapeake Ripper stopped the music and her heart.

Abigail hid herself behind an overly large meat hook in order to keep her performance believable. She curled herself into a ball against the wall and sniffled loudly so she was discovered. Naturally, Beverly heard her sounds and approached her slowly. She stopped at the girl's feet and gasped at the sight of her behind the hook.

“Abigail?” She asked in hopes that her eyes didn’t deceive her.

“Please, get me out of here. I want to live. Please, I don’t want to die down here!” Abigail screamed as she pressed her hands against the sides of her head in order to cover her ears. Her eyes were squeezed shut in fear.

“Don’t worry Abby. I’ll get you out of here.” Beverly quietly replied as she silently shushed the girl.

“No. No no no no no!” She yelled and cried out as her eyes opened and trailed from the black-haired woman to the devil in the suit standing behind her.

Beverly’s eyes followed Abigail’s stare to the other side of the room. Across the floor she found Hannibal standing straight with his head tilted downwards. The one dim light made shadows where his eyes were. His cheekbones seemed sharper than the blade he held in his right hand. Even without the blade and the blackness covering his eyes Beverly knew what was about to unfold. It was difficult not to know.

Hannibal would make an attempt on her life.

She quickly raised the gun and pointed it at him. She clicked the safety off just as he made his first step towards her. When he was close enough to be more sure of her shot, she would fire a bullet straight into his heart. Like Will had long ago, she would end a man’s life to protect the girl.

While Hannibal approached them and Beverly kept her focused locked on him, Abigail slowly pulled herself off the floor. Hannibal’s slow pace towards them turned into a sprint, which signaled to her that she needed to keep him safe. He would protect her by ending Beverly’s life, and she would protect him by getting the gun out of her hand.

She gripped Beverly’s arm, slamming it down towards the floor and away from Hannibal Lecter. A stray bullet fired into the wall to their side in the process. Beverly turned her

attention to Abigail, who was now ripping the gun from her hand, just as Hannibal reached the two women. Beverly began to charge Abigail, but was met with a masculine arm throwing her back towards him. Abigail raised the gun and pointed it at Beverly with a certainty that she would fire if she moved again.

"I'm sorry Miss Katz." Abigail whispered, her eyes watering again as Hannibal's other arm latched onto her neck.

Beverly tried to break free of the Chesapeake Ripper's grasp, but was met with the loud fire of the gun. A bullet tore into her right foot, which sent a blood curdling scream through the room and most likely the entire house.

At the sound of the scream Abigail's sobs returned. The gun became unsteady in her hands. The swelling of tears in her eyes didn't help matters either. They shook violently, often changing her aim from the woman to the man and back again as she struggled to maintain her composure. Her grip on the gun tightened in hopes of steadying herself, but it was to no avail. She clicked the safety back on out of fear that her shaking hands would fire at the wrong person at the wrong time.

And as Abigail did so the screaming stopped. A hand that was wrapped around Katz's neck now covered her mouth and muffled her cries of pain. And with the violent twist of the neck, the poor lamb was silenced forever.

Hannibal released the black-haired body and it slumped to the floor between them. Abigail watched in horror as the woman's crooked neck hit the cold cement at their feet. When she looked up to Hannibal the man's expression did not change. There was no sense of relief or dread within his eyes. He had looked exactly the same as he did when he entered the kitchen only a few moments before, and it terrified her. She could only imagine what his heart rate was now. Did that not falter as well?

"Your father taught you how to skin animals, correct?" Hannibal asked her as he knelt down before the body and straightened its neck again.

Abigail nodded in response.

“And you know how to slice them without damaging their organs or mutilating the skin?”

Abigail nodded again.

“Good. I need you to slice her vertically a few times. It’ll be a gift to Will for his betrayal.”

“And what will you do?”

“I have another errand to end. Once he’s dealt with, Will shall be a free man. And with that freedom a game of chess shall begin.”

Hannibal stood again and gently adjusted his suit. He checked it for blood splatters that might’ve strayed from Beverly’s foot onto him. He found nothing. Satisfied with his cleanliness, he left the basement and soon the house.

Abigail stayed in the basement besides the body. She didn’t ask what he meant by his words. Instead, she stared at the corpse for a moment as she grabbed the first sharp knife she could get her hands on. The tears dropped onto Beverly Katz’s face as Abigail dug the blade into her. As she split the woman into two and then four pieces the muffled cries became more like a pained wailing. Seeing the woman hit the floor made her realize that she too was not safe. She had traded one evil father for another. What was stopping Hannibal from laying her body on this same floor besides Beverly?

Nothing at all. Nothing was stopping him. She was a dead woman and he was harboring her. He could take as many limbs as he pleased and no one would stop him. And when he was done or grew bored the man could break her neck as well. Nobody would mourn her again; they already had once.

She lifted the blood-covered blade and stared at it. With two clean cuts she could save herself from the fates of so many others. She didn’t want to end up like her mother, her father, the FBI rookie that he never named, or even Beverly. She didn’t want her corpse to be torn apart or turned into a meat soufflé. At least if she delivered the final blows to herself then he wouldn’t get the satisfaction of being the one to end her. She could be free.

She shoved the thought down and tossed the blade aside. No, she couldn't die. Hannibal, though cruel and merciless, was kind to her. He wouldn't kill her just as he wouldn't kill the man who took the life of her father. He went through great lengths to keep her safe and she wouldn't make his efforts mount to nothing. He needed a daughter and she needed a father. Though the circumstances of their family was horrific and wretched, they were still family. She wouldn't leave him behind just as he wouldn't leave her behind. She hated her situation, but she would not try to break the chain that tied her to him.

Instead, she'd keep herself chained to the blood-stained life she was given in hopes that one day she was given the chance to break them. She'd be a willing accomplice until her freedom was granted. Whether in the form of escape or death didn't matter, all she knew what she wanted to escape this life that had been chosen for her.

The Declaration of War

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning list

-mentions of death
-description of hanging
-description of death and dying
-gun violence
-death of a loved one

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Beverly was dead.

The only mercy that his former coworkers provided him was the ability to see her mutilated corpse. Even then it wasn't a mercy. They wheeled him to the scene with a straight jacket and a glorified muzzle. They wheeled him into the observatory like a person would wheel a crate into a warehouse.

As he received this treatment he knew that he wouldn't be able to attend her funeral when the time came. Then again, that was assuming they could put her broken pieces back together again, or find the organs that were ripped out of her.

"She didn't deserve this." Will had repeated to Jack Crawford time and time again as the man wheeled her through the room like they were at a museum and not a crime scene.

The whole situation made his blood boil. If his arms weren't bound he might've strangled Jack. It was his fault after all. He didn't believe him or Beverly. He didn't give her backup when he begged for it. He didn't listen to the thousands of warnings that Will gave him. Now Will's closest friend was dead. Because of Jack's refusal to act, Beverly had been split into thin slices with her organs displayed to all that entered the room.

The worst part: he knew he was also to blame.

Will didn't want to admit it. He knew the human mind prefers to blame others over itself. Will wanted to only blame Jack for her death. He wanted to blame Hannibal for being the one to end her life. He wanted to pretend he had no part in her death when he most certainly did. He was the one who sent her after Hannibal. If it weren't for Will there would've been nothing for Jack to ignore and nobody for Hannibal to kill. It was Will's fault just as it was Jack Crawford's.

He thought about his part in her death from the moment he was dragged away from her to the moment the lights went dark in his cell. He couldn't think of much else. He wouldn't think of much else. He needed to walk himself through the crime scene to find out how his husband killed his friend. He needed to know why. He needed to understand the design behind it.

Will's feeble mind wandered as the dangling of keys drew closer and closer to him. He didn't hear them; he was too lost in his mind. As he replayed the last few months over and over again in his head, the dangling keys were fumbled around the door to Will's cell. Only when the iron-bar door swung open did he snap himself away from Beverly Katz's torn body.

As the cell was locked once again behind the man with the keys Will shot up in his bed. He threw his head towards the creaking sound.

"I thought I wasn't seeing Chilton today." Will commented as the man in white found a place on the floor in the corner of the small cell.

"You aren't." He replied, confirming Will's implication.

"Then why are you here?" Will asked, his eyebrows slightly furrowed in both annoyance and confusion.

"Your husband spoke to Freddie Lounds about your case. I couldn't help but feel like it was a calling card to me." Matthew answered.

"I doubt that." Will retorted.

“Well, even if it isn't, I'm here because I’m a fan of your work.”

“My work?”

“Oh don’t play coy. Your work. Abigail, Marissa, Georgia, all of them.”

Will let out a sudden roar of laughter and then slapped a hand over his mouth. “Contrary to popular belief, I didn’t kill them.”

“Sure. You’re an innocent man and I’m the Tooth Fairy.”

“I’m going to call security. Get out of my cell.” Will snapped in return.

“Don’t bother. I *am* security Will. Frederick Chilton won’t hear your calls because I turned off his cameras and his audio. He doesn’t know I’m here and he doesn’t know we’re comparing notes.” Matthew Brown explained.

“We’re not comparing notes because I didn’t kill them.” Will snarled.

“Ok. Fine. You didn’t kill them.” Brown reiterated with a wink.

Will rolled his eyes in defeat, “You said ‘compare notes’. You’ve killed people?”

“Yes. It’s very thrilling. Mailing you my trophies after is more fun though, I must admit.”

“You sent me trophies? Like— the ears and eyes?” Will asked, now slightly nervous to be in the cell with the man in white.

Matthew smiled. He lightly clapped in joy like a toddler receiving a new toy. It made Will more uneasy than he already was.

“Oh you did get them! Amazing. I wondered if they would ever reach you. I know Frederick and that other guy worked tirelessly to make sure you never saw my offerings. Then I thought I should change things slightly by sending you an alibi, but that didn’t work either.”

“I’m not a god. I don’t want your offerings. I *want* to be left alone.” Will snapped again, his tone both tired and annoyed by the insistence.

“I don’t see you as divine. That’s the guy in the suit’s thing.” Matthew began, “I see you differently. I think you and I are the same. We’re both outcasts seeking revenge for treachery. Have you seen the way that smaller birds will mob a hawk on a wire? You and me, we are hawks, Mr. Graham.”

“How much longer until I’m hooked to the electric chair again?” he muttered to himself. Matthew didn’t hear, or at least pretended not to,”Hawks are solitary birds.”

“Enough of those small birds get together, they chase away the hawk. Imagine if the Hawks worked together.”

Will stared blankly in response. He didn’t want to work with him. It was too risky for a variety of reasons.

“Allow me to prove that our goals align. Name anyone, and I’ll kill them for you. I’ll prove that we’re the same.”

Will’s head slightly tilted at the words he heard. He was shocked by what words seemed to roll off the man’s tongue so casually. Was the man serious?

And regrettably, Will's mind began to wander to who he should name. He immediately thought of the people who had a hand in Beverly Katz's death. If anyone would die it would be someone who killed her.

He immediately thought of Jack. The man was the reason he was in the cell instead of by his friend's side. And it was because of him that she walked into the belly of the beast without any backup or protection. She went to her death alone. She died alone because of Jack Crawford. And to make matters worse, Jack didn't seem any more determined to find her killer. He simply continued on as if her body sliced to pieces and displayed in the observatory was insignificant to him. To Will Graham, that was an offense worthy of death.

Then again, Will had to think logically. Though he wanted to see Jack's body displayed the same way that Beverly's was, there was an understanding that a greater evil should be extinguished first. There was a man who killed his friend and he was running free like nothing happened. That same man had put him into the cell that made him unable to protect her. That man had even tried to kill *him* at one point. It seemed to Will that there was only one clear option.

"Hannibal Lecter." Will said at last.

Beverly was dead. Will's friend was killed by his husband's hand. Any attempts at peace between them were out the window now. Will wished he would be the one to kill him, but he wouldn't mind hearing about the details of it from Bloom or Chilton. In fact, he wouldn't mind if Freddie Lounds wrote about it and posted it on Tattle Crime. Actually, he was ecstatic at the thought.

Hopefully this time he actually died.

—----------

This was not the situation that Hannibal hoped to be in on his one day without patients.

He had spent the night sawing through the judge's skull and carefully removing his brain for another display. It took what felt like an eternity just to clean the body of the blood Hannibal

had spilled. He strained his biceps and his back by hoisting the heavy man onto the hooks, but he didn't mind. The display was perfect. It was beautiful. It was just enough to cause a mistrial and free his mylimasis.

And once the sun finally rose Hannibal met Miss Lounds for a coffee and the inside scoop that he promised her. It had lasted almost four hours longer than he had hoped for. They were at the small cafe with cold drinks until late in the afternoon. And while the man had been trained and groomed to endure such extraneous social endeavors, there was no amount of training that could have prepared him for the frustration and anger that often followed Freddie Lounds. Similarly to Will, Hannibal sometimes felt like an enraged bull at the sight of her red hair. He would wish for her death, but he knew cockroaches had a way of evading him.

And naturally, as a way of trying to cope with the situation he put himself in, he decided to go for a swim. It was calming. The cold water splashing against his chest felt like serenity reaching him at last. He felt at peace in the water. It was a small glimpse at the joy he could feel.

But of course, it had to be interrupted by the dart in his back and the unconsciousness that followed.

When he woke again he found his arms tied to a wooden pole and his legs barely touching a small bucket on the ground. His neck was held within a noose. With every breath he took the oozing of his crimson blood was felt down his body. He was bleeding. One wrong move would kill him. And oddly enough, he wanted to escape. He wouldn't say or do anything that would put his life more on the line.

He couldn't help but admire the irony of the situation.

The room was dark; he couldn't tell where he was. He couldn't see more than a few feet in front of him and he certainly couldn't see whoever his captor was. If he was any different he might've been afraid. He might've felt his heart pounding and his stomach dropping at the thought that it all could end any second now. He knew he should; it was the normal reaction after all, yet he couldn't muster the strength to bring his heart rate above eighty five.

His eyes wandered for a moment in hopes of finding anything that would help him discover where he was. And if it was possible, he would try to find a way to escape. He wanted to escape, not survive. He didn't feel the primal need to survive. The indomitable human spirit never really applied to him. He simply chose to keep pushing forward in the name of witnessing what would happen if he did. Life was more intriguing that way.

And as his eyes slowly began to slide downwards he noticed a person with white pants and an ugly jacket. The man was most likely Hannibal's captor. He decided to keep his attention on him; it was the only thing he could see after all.

The man, who had been sitting on the ground against the wall, stood and approached the man on the makeshift cross. He looked him up and down in judgment– or perhaps satisfaction– before he pulled the gun from the waistband of his white scrub pants.

"Judas had the decency to hang himself in shame at his betrayal, but I thought you needed help." The man explained as he knelt down by the bucket that Hannibal was gently standing over, "Did you know that the phrase 'to kick the bucket' came from exactly this situation? You could kick it out right now yourself and it'd all be over. Quicker than bleeding out."

"You're a nurse at the hospital. You're setting a new standard of care. " Hannibal concluded after a moment of looking at the man. The white pants gave it away. "Will Graham is not what you think. He's not a murderer."

"He is now. By proxy."

"He asked you to do this?"

"What are friends for?" Matthew answered as he stood again and stepped away from the bucket, "Now I'm going to ask you a few yes or no questions while you still have enough blood coursing through your brain to answer them. Are you ready?"

Hannibal nodded slightly in response.

“Did you kill the judge?”

Hannibal refused to answer the question. He simply kept his eyes locked on Matthew. He was surprised that word of his kill had spread as quickly as it did. It had only been a few hours after all.

“I can ask you yes-or-no questions, you don't have to say a word, and I'll know what the answer is. The pupil dilates with specific mental efforts. You dilate, that's a ‘yes.’ No dilation equals ‘no’.” The man in white explained, “Now, are you the Chesapeake Ripper?”

Hannibal’s pupils expanded against his will. Matthew took notice immediately; there was no point in trying to hide it.

“How many times have you watched someone cling on to a life that's not really worth living? Eking out a few extra seconds. Wondering why they bother.” Matthew continued, “I know why. Life is precious.”

The man took a few steps closer, his face warping into an evil grin as he looked up at Hannibal, “I wonder what they're gonna call me. You know, the Iroquois used to eat their enemies to take their strength. Maybe your murders will become my murders. I'll be the Chesapeake Ripper now.”

“Only if you eat me.” Hannibal whispered against the rope around his neck..

The captor cocked his head slowly to the side in confusion and then realized what Hannibal had said to him, but before he could reply there were two sets of footsteps growing closer.

“Hold that thought.” Matthew commented as he quickly checked to make sure his gun was locked and loaded. He turned the safety off quickly with the intent to kill. He would not take a cell beside Will Graham.

“FREEZE! FBI!” Jack boomed as he pointed the gun at the man in the white pants.

“Hes– got a gun!” Hannibal grunted as loud as he could while Matthew pointed his own pistol at Jack.

Jack didn’t let him take a shot at him. Jack shot him twice before a single bullet from Matthew’s gun could be fired at him first.

Matthew loudly hit the ground almost instantly, but he wasn’t dead yet. He knew he had a few moments before he would inevitably die of blood loss. Soon the hawk would die at the hands of the small birds. If Jack even tried to save him or try to bring him a stretcher and an ambulance, then he would ensure he died quicker. He would not be a prisoner of the little birds. He also wasn’t going to die without his promise being fulfilled.

Matthew held his bleeding stomach with one arm as he used the other to inch his way over to Hannibal. The deep red of his blood slipped between his fingers and smeared along the ground as he dragged himself, but he paid it no mind. He was determined. And with a few more pulls of his body across the cold ground, Matthew reached the bucket. With the last ounce of life he had left he hit the bucket aside in the attempt to take the man with him into death’s embrace.

Hannibal’s body lowered and his throat began to strain against the weight of his body being held by the rope. He couldn’t breathe and the wooden pole he was tied to had prevented him from breaking free. He wasn’t sure if Jack would be able to save him. He was going to die.

Hannibal knew that he should fear death, yet he couldn’t help but find comfort in it. He had been close with death for almost the entirety of his life. Death had taken his parents from him too early. Death then decided he wasn’t satisfied and stole his sister from him too. And since their deaths the Lithuanian man had made gruesome tributes to death. Hannibal and Death had become old friends. Watching as his vision began to fade into nothing felt like the sweet embrace of a friend more than it felt like dying. He had lived a long life; a lot longer than he should have lived. He loved like he had hoped. And in his own twisted way, he had a family. He knew that if he died then they would both be financially and legally cared for. He knew that if he was going to die then this would be the perfect time. He had lost. He had loved. He had lived. He had a thrilling and extraordinary life. If he died now then he wouldn’t have to risk watching his life fall into tragedy.

He was glad to die. He was ready for death to take him to finally see his sister again at long last. He missed her sweet face and her light blonde hair. He missed the contagious laughter that she spread like a plague through their childhood home. He ached to sit on the docks with her again as she pretended to fish with a small stick and a string. He missed the optimism of her youth. Death was so calming to him because he knew that he would take Hannibal to her. When death took his hand he knew it would be to guide it into Mischa's once again. He yearned to see his sister again, and he didn't mind dying for the possibility of seeing the child that was ripped from him.

Jack Crawford had other plans.

Hannibal couldn't hear what he screamed to the other person present. He could barely see as the man hoisted him up and held him just high enough to stop the process of dying. If his arms weren't bound then he might've pushed Jack away from him. Perhaps it is for the best that he didn't have the mobility or the strength to resist the man between him and Death.

As the blood circulation found his brain again he finally processed what had happened. Will had sent Matthew Brown to kill him. After everything he had done for Will and for his family, the man had still tried to have him killed.

The familiar stabbing pain of betrayal shot through his barely beating heart once more.

Will had decided that they once again were at war. Love and war between the two men had become all too common, but all was fair in love and war. And since his husband had declared war against him once again, Hannibal decided he needed to level the playing field. He needed to get even with the man.

And once the ropes were removed from his neck, he would.

Chapter End Notes

Hey my lovelies!! With another school year and volleyball season starting up my life has become a bit chaotic. I'm going to try and post weekly still, but I may fall behind at

times. If that's ever the case please know I did NOT abandon the works. I'm going to write until it's done I swear.

Even Steven

Chapter Notes

Before I give the trigger warnings, I want to mention that there is some slight suggestive content. It is not full blown smut but it does come pretty close. To those who prefer not to read smut, I am so sorry. I can't even promise that it won't happen again because this fanfiction honestly writes itself. I am a mere vessel.

Trigger Warning List

-mentions of death
-depictions of toxic romance
-mentions of blood
-slightly suggestive content
-mentions of bondage
-slight hinting at cannibalism
-references to mutilation

Will wasn’t shocked that Hannibal sent a killer of his own after Will. Hannibal didn’t like the concept of betrayal, so it was only natural for him to try and even the score. What did shock him, however, was the fact that the man that was sent had made the attack in his home but found his life abruptly ending. Will defended both himself and his pack of dogs and killed his attacker in the process, yet he felt no regret. He enjoyed it, and that once horrifying feeling had become almost exciting.

He wouldn’t admit to that of course; especially not to his husband.

Even after dragging the body from his home to Hannibal’s office he still wouldn’t admit it. When he pounded his fist against the door he even dared to hide the euphoria he had felt from his actions. He had no choice but to put the persona back in place once the door opened in front of him.

Upon seeing Doctor Lecter again there was a sudden rush of warmth. He had planned to make another attempt on the man’s life for endangering his dogs. He planned to give a speech about how much he hated the man and wished that the crazed nurse was successful in his own attempt to kill him. He wanted to call him a variety of horrible things and curse his very

existence. He wanted to throw the corpse in his hand at the man and laugh as his husband stared at him in horror. Prior to seeing him that had been his goal. The warmth he felt upon seeing him had destroyed any chances of him ever reaching that goal.

He could feel everything that the people around him felt. It was a gift sometimes, most times it was not. Will at nearly every occasion had considered his glorified empathy as a curse; now more than ever. He didn't want to feel the hope that radiated off of the European's skin. He wanted to deny the light of love in Hannibal's eyes from reaching him, yet they hit him like a punch to the gut anyway. He could feel the hidden joy that his husband felt at the sight of him. Though Will could see the neutrality on his face, slivers of that happiness seemed to slip through the cracks of Hannibal's facade. And while being able to sense these emotions had made it more difficult for the wall he built and his facade to remain, he was grateful to know that Hannibal's love still remained.

"We're even." Will blurted as he dropped the body he had dragged to the door.

"I beg your pardon?" Hannibal asked as his eyes wandered from Will to the body and back again.

"I tried to kill you. You tried to kill me. Even Steven." Will began as he tried to put on a mask of neutrality towards the man, "We've both acted rashly. I'm done."

Hannibal nodded, "Would you like to come in?"

The mask seemed to melt away as quickly as it was made. At the request, Will couldn't help but feel his lips curl into the slightest smile.

"Yes." Will answered almost instantly as he began to walk into the room where their passionate war against each other had begun.

Hannibal looked out into the hall to ensure that nobody had seen the body, and then dragged it into the room and between their two chairs. Will shut the door and locked it behind them.

There was always comfort in familiarity. However, there was nothing familiar about a dead body between the men as they sat in their usual spots in the room. People often died when they were together, but they never kept their eyes locked intently on each other as the sweet scent of blood began to seep into the air. Never in their short yet passionate union had they actively sat in the leather chairs as Hannibal debated ways of disposing of it. This wasn't their normal, yet it was comforting all the same.

Perhaps this was a sign of what was to come for them.

He closed his eyes and allowed himself to visualize the future that they would share.

It was far different from what he envisioned for himself in the cabin long ago, but he didn't mind. There was still an aesthetic array of furniture and wall decor throughout the shared home. He could see the table, but held a body on it instead of a turkey. His dogs whined and begged for a taste of the dish despite the meat still being raw on the table. The rings they shared were black instead of gold now. They still smiled at each other as they continuously locked eyes. Hannibal still had the soft laugh that he shared with Will. Will still laughed in response to a poor attempt at a joke. Hannibal still carved the meat with his usual precision and buried himself in the flames that erupted from the oil in one of his pans. Will still sat on a counter and watched the man with nothing but awe in his eyes as Hannibal kept his focus on his craft. When the sweet aroma of their meal filled the room and the ovens were powered off again, Hannibal would have Will taste the dish. When Will let out a light moan of delight at the taste, Hannibal would seek that same flavor from Will's lips. Abigail would tell them to "get a room" as she made her way into the kitchen and snatched her portion of the dish and disappeared. Though cadavers scattered the house, they were still smiling and staying true to each other. Their hands were all red with their sins, but they laughed and lived all the same. They still seemed happy. They still seemed in love.

It wasn't the life he had hoped for, but he would love it all the same.

Of course, that was assuming that they could move past the mess they both had made for each other.

Seeing what they could be made him almost depressed. He could have that world. It was so close now. The first forgiveness between the two men had been achieved. There was still a confession Will needed to make though.

Almost instantly after Will traded his blue jumpsuit for flannels he was asked to help Jack pile up evidence against Hannibal. Will tried to refuse. He tried to use every card he had in his hand, but Jack had a better card to put down every time. He eventually agreed to the demands that Jack made, but he regretted it almost immediately. He was angry with Hannibal for a great deal of things, but he wasn't angry enough to involve the FBI in their bloody lovers quarrel. It was meant to stay between the two of them, and he hoped that Hannibal could understand and forgive him for yet another treachery against him.

"Hannibal." Will whispered as he gripped the part of his shirt that laid on his chest, and the hidden wire beneath it.

"Yes, Mylimasis?" Hannibal answered sweetly as he looked away from the corpse and into his eyes.

Will's chest felt instantly tighter. Guilt washed over him yet again. There was no way to lightly break the news to him. Even if there was a gentle way to tell Hannibal about the small microphone that pressed against his skin, there was still the possibility that Hannibal wouldn't consider Graham's behavior as an act of self preservation. Hannibal Lecter could easily see the wire as another scheme, and he had every right to view it that way. The plotting with Freddie Lounds, the kiss just before the stabbing back in the cabin, their knife fight in the woods under the moonlit sky, sending Matthew Brown to ultimately crucify Hannibal; all were perfect evidence to prove that the wire was nothing more than another attempt to ruin the psychiatrist.

Not telling him, however, would sell both Hannibal and Abigail Hobbs to Jack Crawford. By telling Hannibal he risked being put onto the menu, while secrecy would put all three of them onto the chopping block. There was no true right option. All he could do was confess to yet another sin and pray for Lecter's forgiveness that he did not deserve.

"I've reread the book we talked about when you visited me." He mumbled, his eyes looking down at the fistful of his shirt and then back at Hannibal.

Hannibal nodded, understanding the reference to the classic novel by George Orwell. He took a moment to figure out how exactly he was going to rip the mic from the man's chest without incriminating him once more in Jack Crawford's eyes.

“You’ve reread Fifty Shades of Grey? I must admit, I didn’t see you as the type to enjoy such erotic novels on multiple occasions.” Hannibal said at last. He stood from his seat and stepped over the corpse. He found a seat at the arm of Will’s chair, “What made you so inclined to read it again?”

“In truth, I missed you.” Will replied in an attempt to add to the lie that Hannibal had forged for the microphone attached to Will’s body.

“You were missed as well Mylimasis. Your side of the bed was too cold for my liking. Every room felt too quiet without your presence.” Hannibal cooed as he began to loudly exaggerate the kisses that he placed all over Will’s face.

“Then perhaps we should do something louder than simple conversation.” Will suggested softly as he put a hand in his husband’s neat hair and gently pulled Hannibal’s lips closer to his own.

“And what did you have in mind, Will?” Hannibal breathed.

Will replied with his lips pressing against Hannibal’s. A slight gasp of forced shock escaped Hannibal’s lips as Will silenced it with more passion.

In truth, Hannibal might’ve ‘forgotten’ about the wires strapped to Will’s body if it meant they could continue to kiss for the rest of the night. He didn’t want to pull away from the man until the sun glared through the windows. In fact, as he grabbed Will’s wired chest and led Will from the chair over to his desk Hannibal found himself debating to turn their act into reality. He had missed the way his kiss of death and Will’s kiss of life had locked them together like magnets.

“Take your shirt off.” Hannibal breathed desperately as he pulled his lips away and leaned himself against his desk.

“I don’t know–” Will began while trying to make himself sound nervous.

“Please.” Hannibal begged.

Will, almost too eagerly, had detached the wires that they had secured to him and ripped both his jacket and his flannel off. He purposely threw it behind him in hopes that they would step on the equipment and shattered it under the weight of their bodies.

Hannibal’s heart rate never went above eighty five. His heart never raced or pounded in his chest, but he could feel it skip a beat at the sight of his husband’s bare chest before him. His body glistened, making each toned muscle appear more similar to stained glass than flesh. If it weren’t for the wire and the body between the two leather chairs, he might’ve ravished Will like a starved man. However, he forced himself to keep his composure. Hannibal was a gentleman. He would cook for his husband first and take them to his bedroom. He wouldn’t disrespect or degrade Will with anything less than that.

“You’re divine.” Hannibal managed to purr at last as he wrapped his hands around Will’s bare waist.

Will pulled back into the kiss as he once more gripped Hannibal’s hair. His other hand found the small of Hannibal’s back and used it to pull them both away from the desk. They both exaggerated their kisses to further sell the encounter to the agent on the other side of the wire. They both stepped over the crumpled up shirt and the small microphone that it hid. Will even threw them both onto the ground and rolled them both over it with their lips still locked in order to ensure it was broken. He wouldn’t take the risk of it catching their conversations.

If it weren’t for the growing scent of the body, Will might not have ever pulled away from Hannibal. He might’ve ripped each piece of his elaborate suit off of him or would have shredded it to pieces. Their world always had a way of getting in the way of passion.

Will pulled himself off of his husband, and Hannibal followed his lead. Will lifted his shirt and the broken pieces of equipment fell back onto the ground. Hannibal smiled at the sight and kissed Will’s cheek.

“You’re quite the actor Mylimasis.” Hannibal complimented as he stood and offered a hand to Will.

“I doubt we were acting.” Will replied as he accepted the man’s hand and pulled himself off the ground.

Hannibal pursed his lips at the comment. It was the truth, but he didn’t expect Will to be so blunt. He should’ve known better. Will was always a painfully blunt man.

“I take it you killed the judge.” Will commented as he walked, with his hand in Hannibal’s, over to the corpse.

“We all do reckless things when we’re in love.” Hannibal answered.

Will rolled his eyes and followed it with a slight involuntary smile. He forgot how much he missed a more civil version of them together.

“And Abigail?” Will added.

“Our little hawk is safe. She has taken a liking to the movie Nosferatu.”

“She likes that crap?”

“She at least prefers it over *Gone With the Wind* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* .”

“So she just chose the least awful movie in your collection” Will commented as he looked away from the body and over to Hannibal for a moment, “I think we should introduce you to real cinema, like Saw.”

“Saw?”

“Actually, maybe not. It would give you too many ideas and you’re already terrifying enough.”

“Very well then,” Hannibal chuckled.

“I’m sorry about the….” Will’s voice trailed off as he pointed back at the wire.

“It’s alright. It was bound to happen eventually, but I’m shocked to find that Jack Crawford had the intelligence to create that idea so quickly.

Will snorted with laughter, “I’m more surprised that he managed to get the idea out without yelling at something.”

“He *is* quite the….. loud……character.”

“We should give him this guy as a present.” Will suggested as he used his foot to point at the corpse.

“Abigail and I have been waiting for a new art project, but I believe that it’s best that this gift does not have ties to us.” Hannibal commented in disagreement, “perhaps tonight you could join us for dinner instead. Preferably without wires of course.”

“Depends. Who are you cooking?”

“I haven’t decided yet.”

There was a brief silence between them that followed. It wasn’t awkward or unsettling. It was quite the opposite. The men both simply stood in silence with their hands intertwined and the corpse in front of them like an offering at the feet of gods. This moment was the needed and necessary peace that they both pretended not to long for.

They were deeply and passionately in love. Though Will tried to hide or deny it, that was the cold hard truth. It would've been easier to loathe the man and pray for his downfall, yet he couldn't seem to stay away. Their circumstances were chains, yet Will often tugged violently at them in hopes of feeling the man's gentle embrace. With each change that Hannibal created within Will's life, the chain links become weaker and weaker. If another body found its way between them, then the chains of morality would finally snap. As they broke Will would be forcefully launched further into the man's arms. And if he dared, with all other aspects of his life uprooted by the severing of the chains, would find home in the bittersweet embrace of the Chesapeake RIpper.

"They won't stop hunting you Hannibal." Will said at last.

"Let them come. The door is open." Hannibal replied, "I've always wanted to have more friends for dinner anyways."

"Do you even have a plan to lure them?"

"Always, but I'll be needing your assistance."

"You want me to play along with Jack's newfound suspicion, don't you?"

"Of course. And I need to open our marriage as well."

Will almost choked on air, "I'm sorry?"

"I need to turn Doctor Bloom into an alibi. To do that I need to bring her into our bed. I can't do that if you won't allow it. "

"There's no other way to turn her into an alibi?"

“There’s one, but we don’t have enough time for it.”

“It’s fine then. I want to know exactly when it happens.”

“You have my word.”

“And I also want to know exactly what your plan is.”

“That was my intention.” He replied, “I’m going to turn the wolves against each other and watch as they all eat each other alive.”

“Speak normal.” Will snapped, slightly annoyed by the broad metaphor.

“Has Crawford told you about Miss Miriam Lass yet?” Hannibal asked him as he let go of Will and bent down over the corpse.

“I can’t say that he has. The name isn’t ringing any bells.”

“Well, you’ll have the pleasure of meeting her soon.”

The Wolves' Claim

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning List

-mentions of cannibalism
-descriptions of mutilation
-conversations about sex, and references to it
-mentions of drugging
-brief mentions of murder
-references to kidnapping
-slight gore

I might've forgotten something, but be warned its a light chapter with dark undertones

Will made every effort not to ever go to the man's house when Alana Bloom was there. It was already uncomfortable enough when he knew about the passions occurring in his husband's bed, he wouldn't make matters worse by being in the house. The plan that Hannibal put into place would backfire the second that Will's jealousy took control. Abigail would be sentenced to death a second time. If he was ever in the house when it happened, then Will might've killed his friend and found himself back in the blue jumpsuit. He would never make an attempt to risk it.

Yet he found himself, per Hannibal's request, at the door with Alana's car parked next to Hannibal's behind him. He stood with his knuckles lightly pressed against the door, waiting for a decision to be made. Both his mind and body were confused as to whether or not he should knock at the door or leave the two alone. He eventually, after about ten minutes of mental warfare, chose to knock anyway. Though it was Alana's time with Hannibal, the man was still his husband. He still had a right to be there.

The door opened almost immediately, like Hannibal had been waiting for him. The door slowly creaked open to reveal the living room and a small coffee table within it. Will reluctantly stepped inside and carefully shut the door behind him. He looked around the room but could not find anything either the adulterer or the mistress. Instead, he found Abigail sitting in one of the couches and two dress shirts on the floor in front of them.

“Are they done yet?” Will asked Abigail as he sat in a chair across from her.

“They never started.” Abigail answered as she crossed her legs.

“He was one for overly long foreplay. Said it’s more *intimate* .” Will spat.

“Ew. Gross.” Abigail replied, “no. He couldn’t do it.”

“What?”

“He put something in her beer and set her in one of the guest rooms. I switched her blouse for one of his dress shirts while he stood in the kitchen trying not to cry or something. I wasn’t paying attention, but I know he didn’t touch her that way. He said something about betraying your marriage I think.”

Though he knew he should be worried for Hannibal, but he seemed to involuntarily smile at the thought. He didn’t sleep with her after all.

Will looked over to the brunette girl and saw a leather binder carefully concealed in her hands. There was a name written onto it with embroidery that almost seemed to reflect silver against the dim light. Will could only see the letters “For M” through Abigail’s attempt to keep it close to her chest, but Will immediately understood the name.

Hannibal, back at the cabin the morning after their day of passion, had woken up screaming her name. It, oddly enough, managed to wake Will and immediately trigger primal fear within him. Hannibal had tried to deny the moment altogether and blame it on Will’s instability, but Will was no idiot. Will knew what happened. After a brief argument about how Will had truly been woken up, Hannibal had caved and explained the name and its history to Will. As a result, Will had gained a newfound appreciation for the soup that Hannibal had provided them the evening before.

“Don’t let him know you have that.” Will commented as he pointed to the binder.

“I won’t.” Abigail replied as she opened it. There was no sense in trying to hide it within her thin body anymore, “Plus, I can’t read it anyway. I’ve been trying to use Google on days where he’s off with you.”

“Let me see it.” Will commanded as he held a hand out to receive it.

Abigail understood and relinquished the open binder to the brunette man. Will flipped through a few pages of it. In the pages he found a recipe for the dish that he and Hannibal had shared back in the cabin. At the top of the page it had the name 'Grutus' written in elegant cursive. Will recognized the name as the man Hannibal had put into the soup and then shut the binder quickly. He handed it back to Abigail immediately after.

“They’re recipes. All soups. Now put it back where you found it.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Put. It. Back.”

“Why? What’s so wrong about it.”

Will sighed, “They put his sister into a soup. They killed her and put her in a soup. Now put it back Abigail. Don’t let him know you took it.”

Abigail immediately obeyed, standing up from his couch and making her way into the kitchen. She gently placed the binder back into its home and returned herself to the couch.

“Thank you. Now, where is Hannibal at?”

—---

Considering that the warehouse was supposed to be abandoned, it was pleasantly put together. It had a generic aura to it, and had no hints that Hannibal was the one to use it. Wood covered the floors and the walls. A small well was filled with water in the back corner of the room, with an almost empty well next to it. Both had large wooden covers to conceal what lay at the bottom. A tree had sprouted within the building thanks to gentle care, but its branches seemed to sprout earlier than it should– like it was meant to hold something.

When Will walked into the warehouse, Hannibal was in a plastic suit gutting the stomach of yet another Chesapeake Ripper victim. He heard Will enter, but he didn't stop his precise slicing of flesh. Instead, he began to surgically remove each of the corpse's ribs.

"Teenagers are hard work." Will commented.

"Abigail?" Hannibal asked without looking at the man that entered.

"Yeah. She touched something she shouldn't. Fought me on putting it back." Will explained as his eyes remained locked on Hannibal and his work.

"She touched Mischa's belongings again?" Hannibal asked, this time with a slight hint of irritation in his tone.

"Yeah." Will answered, "but she put it back. It took me explaining what happened in order to make it happen, but it's put back."

Hannibal let out a loud sigh and continued with his careful slicing of the skin.

"I think you see her," Will added, "in Abigail I mean."

"We all see the past in our present. You used to see her father." Hannibal snapped.

“Touche. I’ll drop it then.” Will said as he threw his hands into the air in surrender.

Their was a brief silence between the two. With Hannibal’s focus locked on his art and Will feeling almost out of place in the building, there wasn’t much to say. Will often opened his mouth to speak, but no words seemed to come out. Besides, Will didn’t want to upset Hannibal more than he had to.

“I heard things didn’t go as planned.” Will began at last as he stepped further into the cabin. He hoped to change the subject to something more professional so there was nothing to be angry over.

“I take it Abigail told you about the encounter.” Hannibal coldly replied as he ripped another rib from the man’s chest.

“She told me that you cried.” Will joked in an attempt to re-establish their natural dynamic.

Hannibal, who was mid-tear, set the rib down and snapped his head over to Will. One of his gloved hands rested on his hip.

“I can assure you, I did not.” he snapped at him before he returned to the body at the table.

“Then why are you being so defensive?” Will retorted, “It’s a sign of guilt on most occasions.”

“You don’t like being psychoanalyzed, yet you choose to inflict it upon me. That seems quite unfair.”

“I-...” Will began, “..... fair point. I’m sorry. It doesn’t excuse it though. We’re married and *you* made sure of that, so as your husband I am trying to be of some use to you. I thought you may want to talk about it.”

“If you want to be of use then get a pair of gloves and hold him open for me. I need to saw through his spine.” Hannibal replied after a moment. It was clear he didn’t want to talk about it just yet.

Will did as he was told; grabbing the blue medical gloves and throwing them onto his hands. They fit snugly against his skin, almost like they were made for him. With a light snap against his wrist, Will grabbed each side of the man’s open torso and began to firmly hold him in place. The psychiatrist turned away from the body and returned with a small bonesaw. It looked expensive, but it also seemed slightly outdated; another way of throwing the FBI off of their tracks.

While one man held the body the other drilled and sawed at the body. The spine was thicker than Will expected, but he didn’t mind. He was not the one doing the cutting. Will found himself directing his focus elsewhere from the boredom. He thought of the corpse that he dragged into the man’s office and what had become of it. The statue he had turned it into was beautiful yet horrifying. It told a story of both tragedy and transformation, similarly to many other works of art and literature. When it was inevitably discovered, most likely soon, then he would be called to examine it. He’d bring Hannibal solely for the theatrics that often comes with him. Jack would most likely reprimand him for his self defense, but Will didn’t mind. It was all part of his design.

“Will.” Hannibal firmly spoke, which snapped Will back into the present moment, “let go.”

Will let go of the man’s sides, “sorry.”

Hannibal did a few more surgical procedures on the corpse, then set him aside.

Hannibal, in silent thanks, planted a light kiss on Will’s cheek. Despite their awkward and slightly argumentative moment before, it still sent a light blush through Will’s skin. And naturally, as if he thought it to be a crime, Will turned away at the feeling.

Hannibal didn’t understand why he found Will sometimes rejecting his own feelings towards him. They had been connected for a lot longer than the time that passed since their first kiss. It wasn’t the fact that Hannibal was the Chesapeake Ripper, or at least it wasn’t anymore. It was a very long time ago, but Will seemed to reach acceptance towards it now. They were married now. And though it was originally to give Hannibal influence within Will’s life, the

man had taken a liking to the married life with him. They were both partners in life and crime. Why Will still felt the need to turn away at the blushing sensation was beyond Hannibal's understanding. However, he wouldn't ask about it. If there came a time in which Will wanted to speak on the matter, then Hannibal would welcome his voice with open arms. For now, there were other matters to attend to.

"Will, could you please press the send button on my device for me please?" Hannibal asked as he removed his gloves and set them into what Will believed to be a compost of some sort.

Will, after a brief moment, turned to face Hannibal. He took another moment to locate the device that Hannibal was mentioning. Will then copied Hannibal's action by putting his own gloves into the same compost before picking up the flip phone from beside the corpse. It was open and had a voice message ready to send. Will pressed the small send button and then the phone began to ring. Startled, Will dropped the phone back onto the table, which made Hannibal snap his head in concern to his husband.

"Hello?" Jack's voice called from the phone.

" *Jack! I don't know where I am. I can't see anything. I was so wrong. I was so wrong. Please Jack, I don't want to die like this"* the phone automatically replied before it hung up automatically.

Will took a few steps away from the phone and the man beside it. He took a few more steps back and nearly tripped on one of the two closed wells.

"Will," the man called as he stepped towards Will.

"Stay back," Will snapped, "I– I need a minute. I-I- wasn't expecting that."

"Understandable. Take your time." Hannibal whispered as he found a cushioned stool to sit upon.

Hannibal watched carefully as the man struggled to regain his sense of stability within his mind. He understood that the message was a shock, and perhaps it was a mistake to have Will initiate it. However, Hannibal needed to ensure his compliance in the future. He needed to ensure that Will could never turn against Hannibal without damning himself. His fingerprints needed to be carefully planted on evidence. He needed to be an active participant. He had to ensure that Will had no choice but to remain his accomplice. To do so meant he had to make Will an active participant.

Will took a few deep breaths. The pounding of his heart couldn't seem to be calmed by the horrid attempt at even breathing. He wasn't afraid of the words like he would fear for his life. He feared the words in a way one would fear a scare actor in a haunted house attraction. The fear that followed the unexpected shock was expected, yet his heart still pounded like a knife was being held to his throat.

He knew that Hannibal did a great deal of horrid things, but he had never witnessed a message made by one of his victims. He definitely hadn't witnessed the message being usd to psychologically torture a future victim. It was a horrid thing to experience, yet a rush of adrenaline shot through him. Was he genuinely *enjoying* this? He hoped not. He had only began to accept the darkness deeply embedded within his tainted soul. He wouldn't allow more darkness in yet. He hated the idea of enjoying the infliction of torment onto others, and he would not acknowledge an enjoyment for it yet, if ever.

"What *was* that?" Will asked between heavy and desperate breaths of uneasiness.

"Do you remember my mention of Miriam Lass?" Hannibal asked in response as he stood and strategically began to place fresh flowers in the hole that the two men created.

"Briefly.." Will answered as his breath finally began to slow.

"That would be her. And do you see the arm laying over on the other side of the room?"

Will turned over to the other side of the room. A long and thin arm laid gently across another table. The end of the arm in which it was severed from the body was cut cleanly, as if it were a surgical procedure. Upon further examination, it was clear that it had been drained of any blood that might've still been embedded in the veins. There were no missing muscles or flesh

missing as far as he could tell. It has a purpose. It was meant to lead to something or someone. That was the design.

If he wasn't standing in the room with the Chesapeake Ripper, he would've easily connected the arm to someone with a doctoral degree, if not to Hannibal himself. It was dangerously obvious that it was him behind the severing of the thin yet muscular arm. Perhaps that was his intention. If he tried to lead the blood trail back to him, then perhaps they would see it as a red herring and take their searches elsewhere. Will didn't bother to ask, he knew that Hannibal often thought out and planned every step he took.

"I take it that it's hers too?" Will asked at last, his mind finally at peace with the horrors surrounding him.

"Indeed. She's in the well to your left. You may see her if you'd like."

"I'd rather not."

"Very well." Hannibal replied, "They'll come here. They'll find her. I need you to lead them towards me. Convince Jack Crawford that it's me. Do anything you must. Annul our marriage if need be. Feed me to the wolves, and they will fight for their claim."

Will nodded. It seemed a simple task, but it almost felt as if too much would go wrong. There was too much on the line for them both. Will, despite what had happened to him, still was a professor. Hannibal was still a respected psychiatrist and had Lithuanian nobility coursing through his cold blooded veins. They both had homes and lives outside of this hobby that Hannibal made for them. Such a straightforward plan could easily destroy everything that they spent their lives building. To Will, that wasn't worth it.

"And if it goes sideways?" Will asked with a slight shake in his voice.

"Then we run. I do believe I owe you a honeymoon."

Will snapped, “No. We aren’t running anywhere. I know you have ties to Europe and all, but I don’t want to uproot my whole life because your plan backfires. I have dogs, Hannibal. We have a daughter. We’re comfortable as we are. So we have to dance around things, fine. But it’s not worth destroying what we built to postpone the inevitable.”

“Define ‘the inevitable’ Will.” Hannibal coldly replied.

“They’re going to catch you if you make one mistake Hannibal. We both know it. One factor unaccounted for will ruin us. Whatever you’re planning has to be perfect, because if it doesn’t all three of us are getting cells. And I know you haven’t seen prison before, but I have. It’s awful. You don’t get to keep your fancy music or your suits. Either Chilton or Jack will separate us. Abigail is put at risk. I understand you’re bored or tired or whatever it is your problem is, but quite frankly I don’t care. You said it yourself, we are her fathers now. Fathers make sacrifices for their children. We need to serve her better by building a stable life for her. We can’t do that if we keep ourselves running. So put your thoughts of running aside because they’re not what’s best for her.”

“Then what would you have me do. Save myself, kill them all?” Hannibal asked slightly sarcastically.

“If it means Abigail can stay in Baltimore, then yes. You and I have ripped her family from her. We ripped away her *life* . She deserves stability. If you screw up then you rob her of that too. We aren’t running. I don’t care who has to die to keep us here, but I’m not going anywhere and neither is she.”

“And we’d never leave without you.”

“Good. Don’t screw up then.”

Hannibal nodded before he put the gloves back onto his hands and got back to work.

Will watched Hannibal as he worked to carefully stuff plants into the body. Small twig branches were injected into the veins and the larger ones were forced into

the corpse's rigid hands. The upper half of the body almost looked like an incomplete art: all that was needed now was a set of roots to hold it upon. Hannibal's gruesome art always had the same beauty of a Renaissance painting. Both Da Vinci and Michelangelo were his only artistic rivals. If he continued with his work, he may even surpass them.

Hannibal, after a few more moments of working on his gothic art, carefully removed the gloves once more and threw them into a trash bin to signal that he was done with his sculpting for the time being. He turned to his husband and gave him a light peck on the cheek before he walked out of the small warehouse.

"Hannibal," Will called out as he subconsciously began to follow him, "where are you going?"

"I fear I won't be home until late tonight." Hannibal answered as he paused in his tracks and turned to face Will, "I must play the role of Cain this evening, which means my place beside Alana will be cold. Send Jack to me in the morning."

"And Abigail?"

"She'll ensure that Alana doesn't wake before my return. I can't allow her to recognize my absence."

Will sheepishly nodded, which led Hannibal to rejoin his side. Will was tense and nervous towards the situation. Hannibal couldn't tell if it was Will's lack of faith towards Hannibal or himself, but either of the two was understandable. Hannibal had only given him bits and pieces of his grand scheme solely out of fear that Jack Crawford would turn Will against him. Though the fear was never expressed among them, he assumed that Will understood him and chose to aid him anyway. If it were himself that he was losing faith in, then Hannibal would try to assist him in any way that he could. He would alter his scheme to ensure Will did not endanger any of them. He would strip the man of his memory again if need be. He'd take on the FBI alone if it meant that Will wouldn't have to worry about becoming a target or a victim of crossfire. And though he hoped to eliminate the men and women working with Jack Crawford, he hoped to keep Will safe more. Will was always the priority.

"You worry too much my mylimasis. It will all go according to plan. Trust that we shall survive this. Aš tave myliu."

Will nodded with the same uncertainty, but it quickly resided with another peck to the cheek. All uncertainty and nervousness seemed to melt away at the touch of the man's lips against the skin. He only left behind a hunger for more between the two. He knew that Hannibal considered himself to be a gentleman,which is why he didn't kiss the man on his lips during his clear anguish. However, that didn't stop Will from kissing him instead.

Their lips became locked in a dance of passion and devotion. It seemed that each kiss they shared felt more and more like an aggressive yearning than it did a moment of tender bliss. It was obvious by the way Hannibal pressed his lips against Will's that he felt a stab of hunger that could only be satisfied by the very taste of Will Graham. Will often met Hannibal's hunger with his own thirst for the man. They were two unlikely worlds merging to create a Utopia that only they could bear witness to.

Hannibal, after a while, pulled away from the kiss. He would have preferred to kiss his husband for eternity, but he had important matters at hand that couldn't be pushed aside. However, he slowly walked Will to his car with their hands intertwined. Hannibal helped him into it and gave the man a light kiss on the forehead.

"Aš tave myliu. Mano širdis amžinai tavo." Hannibal cooed before gently shutting the door to the car and disappearing into his own. Will watched as Hannibal's Bentley hummed to life and slowly drove away from the future crime scene. As the car faded into the distance Will allowed himself to blush lightly at the words whispered to him.

Will had spent months locked in a prison cell. During his incarceration, he had the ability to pick up a few books in his free time. Naturally, after considering his husband's nationality and ethnicity, Will picked up some Lithuanian language books. During the incarceration, Will managed to learn a decent amount of the language. He intended to surprise Hannibal with it when they had a calmer moment, hopefully one without a dead body, between them. However, he simply spent a moment as he pulled away from the warehouse to take in the words that had never been spoken until today.

They were simple words, yet they were all the more significant. There were thousands of ways that Hannibal had, in his own twisted way, displayed the words before Will. Yet Hannibal had never been bold enough to say them outright. He kept his romantic expressions towards Will as artistic and poetic as he could. The words, though they lingered between them with every kiss and every murder, were never uttered. The existence of the words were never acknowledged until today.

English or Lithuanian, it didn't matter to Will. The words were finally spoken at last. After their everlasting dance, they were finally said. Their infinite time of running away and towards each other had finally been given a name. "Meilė" he had called it at last.

Hannibal had said that he loved him.

Tier

Chapter Notes

Happy 20th chapter! Thank you so much for the support and the love! It means the world that you all are taking interest in the deranged ramblings of an over-imaginative girl. With that being said, these next few chapters are going to have a different perspective to them and will diverge heavily from canon. Things will seem confusing for a chapter or two but that is with purpose I swear! The outcome will remain similar to the show, but I just wanted to cause some chaos before I got there.

Trigger Warning List
-mention of murder
-mentions of kidnapping
-descriptions of mutilation and dismemberment
-graphic descriptions of gore
-a brief reference to infidelity
-descriptions of past violence
-anxiety references but not directly mentioned.
-probably something else I forgot

Trying to catch the Chesapeake Ripper was no easy task, and it only seemed to get more difficult with each new day.

Jack Crawford had spent years of his life working tirelessly to catch the Ripper. Every time he thought he was on the verge of catching him he would be proven wrong. Each time that he believed that he backed the Ripper into a corner, he would kill an agent and escape their grasp. The Chesapeake Ripper had a way of slipping through Crawford's fingers like sand before he disappeared back into whatever pit of hell he came from. Crawford had a variety of horrific and infuriating cases throughout his career, but none ever made his blood boil or his skin crawl as much as this case did. Maybe it was because he hadn't lost as much as he had working on any other case.

The cell phone on his desk rang often. It almost always was from the unknown number. He picked it up every time it called, and answered almost always before the third ring. The message was always the same. It never seemed to matter how much Jack yelled at the phone, there was never any new developments with the calls. Tracing was unsuccessful. There were no hidden meanings in her words. There was only what the Ripper allowed him to know.

The same evidence was always on repeat. Miriam Lass was most likely alive. There was no telling where she was. She couldn't see. She didn't want to die. She was deathly afraid. There was nothing else. The phone hung up automatically.

Jack slammed the phone down onto his desk. He let out an exaggerated sigh and a small groan before he stood. He grabbed the phone again and stuffed it into one of his pants pockets. He couldn't stand the idea of waiting in the small room for the phone to ring again. If the ticking of the clock didn't drive him insane, the stacks of papers regarding the Chesapeake Ripper would.

He was met outside of his office by one of his agents. They handed him a file containing a missing persons report. Jack leaned against the shut door and opened it.

Jack thoroughly read the content, but was interrupted by a different agent handing him two more files. After another brief moment of reading the first file, Jack opened the second and examined that one as well. Then he read the third. When the abundance of reading was complete Jack rubbed his right temple and let out a second sigh. Each of the files felt connected, but Jack couldn't put his finger on how. And quite frankly, Jack had too many thoughts rushing through his head like a tornado to properly decipher it. Today was another one of those days where he would have to make someone else do the dirty work.

"Someone call Graham. Tell him to meet me at the Museum ASAP. Tell Price and Zeller the same." Crawford commanded the unrecognized agents as he handed one of the files back to the one that gave it to him.

Jack then left them to get his car. There was a crime scene to examine and he had this overwhelming gut feeling that it would be the one to link them to the Chesapeake Ripper.

—------

Graham, Zeller, and Price were all there by the time Crawford arrived. Graham stood over to the side, examining the room and the mutilated corpse while Price and Zeller bickered about the exact time of death. One claimed that it was between 12 and 1:30 am while the other swore that it was between 11;30 and 12:15 am. Jack could hear the shutting of car doors just

outside, which meant Graham most likely called Bloom instead of other agents doing it for them. He didn't mind. He didn't care who gave the call as long as everyone received it and made their way to the scene. Jack made his way to the center of the chaos and faced the body.

"Randall Tier." Will Graham coldly told Jack he took a step away to make room for him, "The case you were following not too long ago. The one that used to be Hannibal's patient but stopped seeing him. Someone got to him before we could."

Jack looked over to the corpse, which had the skin carefully wrapped around the new arrangement of his bones. The mask— or rather the contraption— that he wore covered his face and was stained red with dried blood. The clothes he wore at the time of death were shredded and covered with both blood and dirt. A small maroon paw print, presumably from a dog like a Boarder Coli or a German Shepard, was somewhat visible on the few bits of skin showing. The mark was clearly made unintentionally; it was not a signature. It was an accidental transfer of his blood that wasn't fully wiped away. Metal poles held him gently above the air as he was displayed before the FBI. The shattered pieces of his fingers were carefully put back together in a way that resembled claws peaking through his skin. With his limbs free from the burden of holding his weight, his arms and legs are extended to give the illusion of being mid-pounce. It felt more like a historic display than a crime scene. It was a horrific sight to behold.

The crinkling sound of the yellow tape as it lifted had shot Jack's glare over to his right. Doctor Alana Bloom and Doctor Hannibal Lecter were found there. Hannibal held the tape high enough for Alana to crouch under before he followed her lead. To his left he could almost feel the heat of Will Graham's false rage at the sight.

"Hannibal." Will spat as his husband lowered the yellow tape.

"Will." Hannibal calmly replied as he made his way over to Jack, "We both received a message saying our expertise were needed. I hope you understand."

"Mhm." Will mumbled as he redirected his focus back to the scene.

The blue gloves on his hands felt more humid and uncomfortable under the fist that Will poorly kept hidden. Alana almost immediately noticed and left Hannibal's side to join Will's.

She stood next to him as they both stared at the same few pieces of evidence at the scene. She didn't need to have an empathy disorder to sense his distress and his anger towards the man. It only took a psychology degree. At first she didn't say anything to him; there was nothing of significance that came to mind at first. Only when she glanced over to Hannibal, who was gazing oh so lovingly at the angry Will Graham, back over to him did she know.

It wouldn't be a calm conversation. If her cards weren't played right then she may receive similar treatment to Hannibal. She couldn't risk it, especially with the eyes she felt locked on her. It had to be calm. The conversation had to be calm. If it was anything but calm she could lose a friend.

"You had him killed." she whispered to Will at last.

"I didn't even know Tier." Will replied as he crouched down at the display's 'mouth'.

"I'm talking about Hannibal." Alana clarified as she remained standing. She lightly adjusted the white dress shirt that was clearly not her size and then the black pencil skirt that it was neatly tucked into, "You sent Matthew Brown after him. Why? What did he do to you?"

"The better question is 'what *hasn't* he done to me'." Will snapped.

"Hannibal is a good man. He's a better man than you give him credit for at least. He's not the ripper. He didn't deserve to have his life put on the line."

Will laughed at both the bluntness and her naivety,. "He's *my* ex husband. I know what kind of man he is. He's spent far too long on borrowed time." Will growled at her, "Besides, when a sick wolf threatens the pack's safety it's put down. He was threatening the safety of the pack."

"Ex husband? You two separated?" Alana reiterated confusedly.

“Yeah, we’re getting a divorce. We got married so he could protect my mind. It doesn’t need his protecting anymore, but rather protection from his ‘protecting’. I’ve been thinking clearer than I had in months, and that’s a result of mental distance from him. There’s no need to stay married.” Will lied, the words gritting through his teeth, “I’d do the same. I’d keep my mind far away from him. Bad things tend to happen when Hannibal Lecter gets into your head.”

“I thought you at least cared for him.”

“I don’t. And he doesn’t care for me. He loves the idea of having someone completely dependent on him. It was me, and now that I’m free he’s moving on to you. I’d stay far away from Hannibal Lecter if I were you.”

“You don’t get a say in what I do. That’s for me to decide. What is for you to decide is whether or not he’s safe. Is he safe Will?”

“Are you asking for him, or yourself?” Will snapped again.

Alana let out an exasperated sigh and left Will alone to his corpse. If she stayed then the conversation wouldn’t have stayed calm. Perhaps his vile nature towards Hannibal would have boiled further until it melted down. Maybe her stubborn and defensive nature might’ve burnt Will instead. Either way, she left to keep the peace. There was no knowing what remained between her and Will now, but at least she managed to keep the brittle peace between them.

She rejoined Hannibal and was immediately greeted with a subtle light squeeze of the hand and then a release. She clearly was interrupting by being present, but she didn’t mind. Anything was better than the volatile Will Graham.

“Abel Gideon disappeared last night after being restrained in the medical bay of the hospital. He ripped Frederick Chilton apart in an intentionally botched surgery, and then disappeared that same night. He didn’t get out on his own, we had to shoot him to preserve Chilton. He was borderline paralyzed; he couldn’t escape alone. He had help.” Jack began as he put a hand on his hip, “Where were you last night?”

“I was at the safety of my home.” Hannibal warmly replied.

“All night?” Jack asked. Hannibal slightly nodded, “Anyone that can verify that?”

“I can.” Alana interrupted as she crossed her arms.

“You were with Hannibal last night?” Jack repeated in his usual accusatory tone.

“All night. He drove me here this morning.” Bloom explained, “Are you accusing Hannibal?”

“No, I’m just asking questions.” Jack explained, “Does Will know about the affair?”

“He and I are no longer enjoying the pleasure of each other’s company. With the final of chapter of one book being complete, I was given permission to start another in which he does not partake.”

“Hm….” Jack said as he looked over to Will, who ripped open Tier’s mouth. Will let out a gasp as something fell out and onto the ground, which led the scattered group to rush over to Will.

Will didn’t let out another sound as he stared down at what hit the ground; he forced himself to collect what little he had left of his reposed state. It was gray in color with hints of peach and partially covered in cement powder. It took Jack a moment to recognize the contents, but he realized that what dropped from the corpse’s mouth was human phalanges.

Alana also gasped when she made the same connection, but Hannibal did not. Neither did Brian Zeller or Jimmy Price. Jack understood why Price and Zeller didn’t react, they’ve been around one too many mutilated corpses to react, but Hannibal hadn’t been around nearly as many. His reaction, or rather lack of, was suspicious. The small seed of doubt, assuming it hadn’t already been lurking in the back of Jack’s mind like a parasite gnawing away at his

sense of understanding towards his seemingly straightforward world, was growing into a sapling at last.

Jimmy, in a desperate attempt to lighten the grim mood, made a joke about Randall Tier being hungry before he died. Nobody laughed. Brian elbowed him in the side.

Brian Zeller picked up a cement-coated finger and examined the print. He looked to Jimmy, which nodded in understanding, before the both disappeared to run tests on the finger; most likely an attempt to match the print to a person.

“Will, tell me what you see. Alana, check on that finger. Report back when they find anything.” Jack ordered as his hands found their usual resting place on his hips.

Alana didn’t protest. Instead, she returned Hannibal’s light squeeze of the hand before she disappeared to the same place the two men had. Will, on the other hand, was hesitant. The eyes felt more beady than they ever felt before. There was suddenly anxiety that came with reconstructing the scene in front of Jack, even more so since he knew more than he could let on. He worried that once he described his design to them he would be damned.

“The killer chose not to dispose of the body, but to display it. A jarring reminder of the informality of death. Randall Tier was denied the respectful end that he himself denied others. This is a humiliation, a final indignity.” Will began, the words spewing from his mouth without thought or calculation. Each word threatened to bring his deed closer and closer to the light. The thought of exposure made both the room and his own blood feel colder.

“He isn't mocking him. This isn't disdain. He's... commemorating him. This killer has no fear for the consequences of what he's done. No guilt.”

“He knew his killer. There's a... familiarity here. Someone who met him and perhaps understood him. Someone he believed to be like him. Different pathology, but a similar primal instinct. “ Hannibal continued, his intention to protect Will from his own mouth almost as clear as crystals shining in the same light that threatened the brunette. Though Hannibal could not do anything to ease the man’s anxiety, like offer his usual words or touches, he could at least provide some support to the man. Will acknowledged it with a nod subtle enough to be seen as an anxiety tick.

“His killer empathized with him?” Jack asked.

“ Don't mistake understanding for empathy, Jack. No, if there's anything, it's... it's envy.” Will corrected as his cold blood began to generate sweating palms.

“Envy?”

“Randall Tier came into his own much easier than whoever killed him. This was a fledgling killer. He's never killed before, not like this. Not like this, no. This is the nightmare that followed him out of his dreams.” Will explained as he looked over to Hannibal, who remained with his neutral expression. While Will panicked through each word Hannibal simply stared with both professional curiosity and sadistic delight. He was too good at this.

“So then what’s the fingers?” Jack questioned as he pointed at the other fingers on the ground at Will’s feet.

“The killer had a friend; a mentor. Someone who saw the killer’s vision because it was based on his own. We can assume that mentor is the Chesapeake Ripper for the time being. It would explain the display. Friends, lovers, it’s difficult to tell what the two killers are. But, they’re close enough for the Ripper to plant the fingers there in order to take credit for the killer’s work.” Will continued as he stepped away from the fingers and closer to Hannibal, the accusation present between the grit of his teeth. Perhaps if focused on Hannibal the process of describing his own design would become easier.

“He’s trying to ensure that the killer stays pure in the more civil side of their lives. They don’t want the killer being discovered before he has the chance to blossom into the rose that the Ripper believes him to be. The Ripper is accepting the blame for Tier’s death to protect this new accomplice. ” Hannibal replied as he mirrored Will’s steps with his own.

The man in the suit wanted to reach out for Will. He wanted to take his hand and gently kiss it in silent praise. He wanted to whisper into his ear how well he was doing as he fooled Jack Crawford, but he knew he couldn’t. Any hint of affection between them could ruin their fragile personas of hate and distance. He couldn’t allow that.

“So the Chesapeake Ripper had a partner now.” Jack questioned as he watched the two hateful men grow closer like two magnets of opposite charges pulling towards each other against their better judgment.

“More like Frankenstein found his bride.” Will interrupted; his body now close enough to teeter them both on the line between enemies and passionate lovers. The closeness was dangerous. It was dangerous enough to potentially earn Will another wire to the chest. He had to step away; he knew he should. Yet he couldn’t find the strength to peel away from his husband. There was always a certain sense of security found within the presence of the man.

“We found something.” Jimmy Price shouted from a short distance as he, Brian, and Alana rushed over to Jack.

“What is it?’ Jack snapped, anticipation seeping from his lips and leaking into his tone.

“The prints match Gideon, but they also have DNA in the nails that match Miriam Lass.” Brian explained, the anticipation rubbing off onto his own tone.

“That’s good news. Anything else?” Will asked.

“The cement on the fingers was broken down and traced. We managed to narrow it down to a few places that were built in the late 70s since they had mirex content in it. Then we went to see which of the places were closed to the public or recently made a call to the police and BINGO! We found our connection to the crime scene.” Jimmy added.

“The Ripper wants us to go there. He has a purpose behind it.” Jack deduced as he crossed his arms

“Then perhaps we should go and find out what it is. He’s not going to invite us over for dinner after all” Will commanded as he stepped away from Hannibal, “We have to go to him first. We have no choice but to play his game.”

Isley

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning List!!! Full disclosure, I probably forgot something so be warned!

-mentions of kidnapping
-brief mention of unethical psychiatrist patient relations
-graphic descriptions of a crime scene
-graphic descriptions of mutilation and dismembering
-mentions of kidnapping
-mentions of death
-probably something else

The torso and arms of the body were carefully enveloped with oak branches and green vines. The rigid hands held the severed branches of the tree like a candelabra holding the burning wax. The man's face had been bashed in to make room for the collection of roses that sprouted from it. The ears, or rather what was left of the ears, had ants crawling out from within to help tend to the flowers. Bees buzzed around the corpse's hair, which had an oddly sweet aroma to it. The corpse was nothing like Will remembered it being; The Chesapeake Ripper had been busy.

Will, after a moment of staring at the concrete and the cement around the human tree, thought back to Jack's conversation with him in the car on the way to the scene. The suspicion was planted despite the wire being without assistance. Will was oddly successful in his attempt to turn a wolf against him. Now he had to turn the rest in the same direction.

When Hannibal and Alana inevitably arrived at the scene, Will got to work. He took a breath and began to analyze the changes that Hannibal had made to their work.

Beside the face being stripped away by the Ripper, the right arm was surgically stitched onto the torso. The arm looked slightly different in color, but Will made the assumption that it was because of the separation between the arm and rest of the body. He purposely made the assumption; he wouldn't look too deep. He wanted to be wrong to keep his innocence in the eyes of the FBI. Though he realized the true reason behind the stitched arm, he wouldn't admit to it. It keeps his blind appearance.

Jimmy Price and Brian Zeller arrived at the scene a moment later. Alana and Jack watched as Price made his way out of the passenger seat and looped around the front of the car in order to open the door for Zeller. Zeller stepped out and gave Price a quick peck to the lips before he opened the back seat and began to pawn off their shared equipment to Price. Jimmy smiled brighter than anyone in the Behavioral Science Unit had ever seen. It shot a bittersweet smile through Doctor Bloom's face.

She had gotten in the way of a similar love.

Hannibal greeted the two forensic lovers just as Alana severed herself from Hannibal's side to rejoin Jack's. She didn't want to face either the psychiatrist or the professor, so her only company remaining was the head of the Behavioral Science Unit. She didn't mind, she and Jack had become close ever since Will's incarceration. He gave her a weak smile, which she returned with similar weakness.

"You ok?" Jack asked her as his eyes drifted from Will and the corpse to Alana.

"No better off than you." Alana replied, "Why must everything be so complex?"

"You can say that again." Jack grumbled.

As the two forensics lovers began to set up their equipment, Hannibal made his way to Will. The brunette did not look at him (he was too focused on trying to look focused), but the man in the suit could not peel his eyes away from the brunette. They stood for a moment in silence, neither of the two daring to speak to each other. Will didn't want to speak out of fear that he would blow his cover, and Hannibal did not speak simply because he was too lost in Will's features. Alana, who was still conversing with Jack, took notice of it and a pang of guilt shot through her. She knew their falling out was never her fault, but she believed that the wall preventing them from reconnection had been built by her. She made a note to acknowledge it after this case.

"He didn't act alone." Hannibal commented at last.

"The one who killed Randall Tier helped design this." Will added.

“He made some changes to keep his accomplice pure.”

“It’s working. They’re clueless.” Will replied, “The arm is different.”

“Most likely the next stroke of the Chesapeake Ripper’s brush. It’s intentional, similar to the strategic distortion of the *Screaming Woman* painting. The only question is ‘which way does the brush stroke flow?’” Hannibal continued.

“Perhaps somewhere secluded, like a cabin or warehouse.”

“Most likely to be a warehouse. A cabin is too connected to a killer. It would be similar to revealing his signature or his name. A warehouse is most likely to be secluded or abandoned.”

“Will there be evidence to damn him if he intends to lead us there?”

“He does, but won’t be used against him. He most likely left something that is more damning for someone else.”

Will nodded, the words almost immediately translated in his mind. The plan, in its cryptic way, had been revealed in its entirety to Will. With the beginning steps already taken, the small snowball had been revealed as an avalanche to Will with the knowledge that he couldn’t put a stop to it if he tried. He has no choice but to step aside and watch it unfold; taking everything familiar with it.

“Jack,” Will began again as he turned to him, “Run tests on the right arm. It doesn’t look right; I don’t think it's his.”

“And why not?” Alana asked Will.

“Too much smaller in size. Different skin tone. Different fingernails. The features are both muscular and dainty simultaneously. The right arm is clearly a woman’s, which means it’s another sign.” Will clarified as he stepped away from Hannibal in order to resume his performance of hatred.

“Then we’ll find what it’s pointing to.” Jack announced just as Brian and Jimmy both began to collect the prints from both hands.

Jimmy Price finished taking the prints before Brian did, which led him to taking swabs of various other parts of the crime scene. Brian after finishing with the collection of the prints, began to use the portable equipment to quickly run the data through the fingerprint database. The left hand’s prints revealed the body as Sheldon Isley, a city councilman that did not have the cleanest reputation, and the right hand’s prints were revealed as Miriam Lass’s.

The announcement about the prints sent a chill down his spine, which led to a subconscious shudder. First the ripper was leaving voicemails for Jack. Now he was leaving body parts for him to discover. Jack knew there was a purpose intended for it; one meant for Jack and Jack alone.

What could it possibly be? Was he trying to give Jack false hope in order to crush his will again? Did he hope that it would break his spirit to the point where it would keep him away from the case? Or perhaps it was an attempt to make Jack enraged enough to make a dumb mistake that would cost him his life? Or worse, was this the Chesapeake Ripper’s final bow? Did he know that he was nearing the end of his time in the shadows and he’s trying to foreshadow Miriam as the final victim?

A second shudder shot through his body at the thought. No, Jack wouldn’t let that happen. Miriam Lass would escape this case alive if Jack had any say in the matter.

“Scan for chemicals and elements on the body, and her arm. Maybe we can trace it somewhere, anywhere.” Jack commanded, his eyes not leaving the more feminine of the two arms in the tree.

“Already on it. Results should be in soon. We’re playing the waiting game now.” Price explained as his gaze trailed Zeller, who was stalking the screens he had set up in hopes of receiving the results.

Jack nodded and a silence took hold over the group. Most of them looked around the barren parking lot or took a sudden interest in Isley's dismemberment. The silence pained Will especially. Without Beverly and her clever wit, the ropes of connection between him and the group had been severed. Hannibal had ensured that he could never tie them back together by using the severed parts to tie Will to himself. The unnatural sense of belonging that he once felt had no chances of ever returning to him; he was alone again. There was nowhere else to turn but towards his cannibalistic lover.

"Hannibal, a word." Alana called before she started walking towards his Bentley. He followed her with the illusion of eagerness, but gave a quick glance over to Will in order to reveal his lack of care for her. A small reassurance, but one that did not go unnoticed.

When the two reached the Bentley, Alana opened the back seat of the Bentley and slid inside. Hannibal copied her and then shut the door behind him. Nobody would hear or see what occurred in the car.

"I can't do this." Alana said bluntly as soon as the door was shut.

"If the case is too much stress for you to handle, then make Jack Crawford aware. After recent events I doubt he'd force you to endure the content of it." Hannibal replied, intentionally playing dumb.

"No. The case is fine. Oddly enough, that isn't the worst that I've seen. And with Gideon's fingers in a plastic bag somewhere I feel safer than I have in awhile." Alana clarified as she slid further back on the seat so her back pressed against the other closed door, "I'm talking about us. I can't do 'us'. It's wrong."

"The only wrong in love is a refusal to act upon it."

"Except it's not love, is it? It's a distraction, for both of us. You love Will, and you're projecting onto me in hopes that you'll forget that. I'm projecting my love for my own patient onto you in hopes that I'll forget her. It's wrong for us to blind each other in an attempt to blind ourselves."

Hannibal simply stared at her for a moment as he calculated his next steps. He had misread her and therefore miscalculated his plan. He needed to think of a way to recover, and quickly. If he didn't the whole endeavor and the hardships he endured with Will would be for not. He couldn't allow that to occur.

He sighed, "May I at least have the pleasure of knowing her name?"

"Margot." Alana replied, her voice fighting to stay neutral; it failed and a slight hint of bliss escaped with her words.

"If you'd like, you could refer her to me. And once she's transferred into my care, the freedom of love will be yours to pursue." Hannibal offered with a small smile to mirror her joy.

"You'd do that?" she asked.

"Above all, you're a friend to me Alana." Hannibal answered, "but in return I'm afraid I'll have to ask a small favor of my own."

"Anything."

"I'd like for you, when it's most convenient for you of course, to stay a few nights in my home. Jack Crawford has begun to suspect me as a result of Will's accusations, which you have already taken notice to. With Will being one of the accusers, I have no one able to verify my whereabouts. I'd like, with your consent of course, to turn you into an alibi for the time being."

Alana nodded, "Sure. We can do that. I'd like for it to be planned in advance and make it sporadic. I would prefer to not be invading your home nightly."

“Of course, but it is not invading if you’re invited.”

Doctor Bloom opened her mouth to reply, but was interrupted by the frantically loud slough of voices in the distance. Without permission or acknowledgement from the other, the two quickly escaped the Bentley and made their way back to the group. The two, upon rejoining the group, found Brian and Jimmy high-fiving each other for their speed of work. The tracing, which usually took hours, managed to display the results within one. Jack however, was not sharing the same joy or pride. He was clearly distressed. His face began to bead with sweat and his face reeked with anxiety. Will detected it and began to mirror it for different reasons. While Jack was panicking over what state he would find Miriam Lass in, Will was panicking over the belief that their lives would soon be over. Fear and anxiety was everywhere.

The location that the body traced back to didn’t exactly have a name. It was abandoned and had no record owner. There wouldn’t be a need for a warrant. However, they couldn’t provide a proper address because of its abandonment. Instead, they gave the address to the closest building next door and then provided specific instructions on how to reach the building.

Hannibal offered Alana his keys to the Bentley so he could accompany Will. Alana was naturally reluctant, but she accepted after some insistence. Jack immediately took notice of it, and then cursed himself for not putting a second wire onto Will Graham. He also took notice of Will arguing with Hannibal for about fifteen minutes over whether or not they should be anywhere near each other at all. Will lost that battle and found himself with Lecter in his passenger seat.

The drive was silent between the two men at first. Will was red with anger and frustration while Lecter scanned the car for any mics and wires. At one point he even laid a hand on Graham’s chest to prove to himself that the microphone wasn’t attached to him again. Will swatted his hand away almost immediately after it touched him.

“You’re an idiot, doctor.” Will spat towards him at last.

“I don’t believe such childish insults are warranted.” Hannibal replied.

“They’re not warranted.” Will mocked, “We’re supposed to hate each other right now and you’re in my car. I told Alana we were divorcing to prove it!”

“And she, after a queer conversation with her, gave me permission to fix our marriage. Neither of us took her homosexual romantic life into account, which requires us to alter strategies.” Hannibal explained.

“Did you really just say homosexuality?” Will muttered to himself, “So what’s the new strategy?”

“We welcome the wires and we spend time dancing around them like an open flame.”

Will sighed, “I hate that. Any other ideas?”

“Unfortunately not. We’ll be putting on the illusion of trying to salvage our relations when the light is on. When it is switched off, we act as we are now.”

“And Alana?”

“Alana agreed to be an alibi in exchange for a transfer of patients. I will have to move our weekly sessions to eight in order to make room for this ‘Margot’ woman. The rest of the details will be discussed tonight over dinner.”

“Fine. And who will the dish be tonight?”

“That’s for you to decide.”

—----------

The abandoned warehouse was ordinary. It was too ordinary for Jack. There wasn’t a single object in the rather large building that could provide the slightest clue as to who was using it in their free time. It was perfectly and strategically organized in a way that couldn’t give

away anything besides what was already known about the Chesapeake Ripper. It made Jack Crawford scowl at the sight and the realization alike.

Brian and Jimmy were taking a variety of photos for further evaluation of the crime scene. In a few minutes Jack and his company would alter the crime scene. There was no avoiding it if there was a need to find evidence.

While they worked to prep the scene for its inevitable alteration, both Hannibal and Will's cars were parked at the scene. Hannibal stepped out of Will's car first just , but he did not circle to the driver's side to hold open the door. Will opened his own door and shut it quickly behind him. While Will made his way to Jack at the doorway Hannibal closely followed as he carefully threw on his overcoat.

After a thumbs up from Zeller, Jack stepped through the doorway and began to examine the objects within the building more closely. There were two large tables; one was made of a deep oak and the other steel. The wood table had its swirling design highlighted with the crimson of blood within the cracks and indents. There was a variety of tools kept on the steel; all enveloped with the same crimson embedded in the wooden table. It almost felt intentionally sloppy. The red splattered over each object or piece of furniture felt strategically placed to produce the illusion of rush. This was planned. Jack didn't need Will Graham's sight to see that.

Will followed him into the room and began to look around the room. He seemed almost unphased by the sight, almost as if he was previously aware of it. Had he been here before, or had the horrors he previously witnessed simply made him completely desensitized?

"This was planned." Will blurted before he stepped deeper into the warehouse.

Will glanced at the tables for a moment and the phone laying among the variety of tools. His fingerprints were on that phone. If they were to check it for latent prints he would immediately be discovered. If they didn't throw him back into his cell for forgery or blackmail they could easily frame him as an accessory to murder. He'd be an accomplice in the eyes of the law.

Without any gloves on his hands, Will picked up the phone and pressed the same button that he had before. After about a moment Jack's phone began to ring. The buzzing vibrated

through his pant pocket in ferocious demand. Jack answered and the message from Miriam played again. The phone hung up on its own. Jack stood with his shaking hand holding his phone and his eyes locked on the phone in Will's hand.

Will could feel the sinking of Crawford's heart into the depths of his stomach. He could feel as each ounce of hope began to pour out of his soul until so little of it remained. He couldn't help but be grateful for the man's grief; he wouldn't question his prints on the phone because he was too consumed with grief. The Chesapeake Ripper had taken her from the world. He took Miriam Lass's arm from her. He had taken her voice. He most likely had taken her life.

Was all the work that Jack had put into finding her all for nothing?

"Jack, you are not to blame." Hannibal reassured him with a light hand to the shoulder.

Jack sent a chilling side eye towards Hannibal before he peeled the hand off of him, "Don't offer your sympathies yet. We haven't found the rest of her yet."

Just as Jack began to turn away from Hannibal, Will slowly approached the two wells within the warehouse. He carefully tore the wooden cover from the first well and gazed into the darkness below. Will stared down into the depths in hopes of finding something– anything– hinting at where the Ripper had taken her. Perhaps he intended to use the rest of her remains to bring them to Abel Gideon. He wouldn't be stupid enough to leave a witness here to find, would he?

Will slammed the cover back onto the well, which led to an overly feminine voice yelping somewhere below him. Jack's face shot over to the direction of the sound before rushing over to the two wells.

"Will. Open the other one!!" Jack shouted as his eyes eagerly glued themselves to the other well.

Will answered the command; throwing the cover of the other well off to the side and away from the group. Jack looked down into the darkness and found a pair of light eyes staring back at him. The dim lighting of the warehouse shown against the knotted blonde locks of the

person's hair. The woman in the well's face was thinner than he previously remembered and her arm seemed to be even thinner than the one attached to the tree. Her features were sickly pale and heavily malnourished. Her once muscular body was nothing more than skin and bones. Her face had hints of red and purple bruising and her fingers were covered with dried mud. The well around her had streaks of white and red, presumably from attempts to escape. Had Jack not seen the fear and the relief in her eyes, he might've thought the woman was nothing more than a hallucination or a ghost.

But the woman was alive. Jack wasn't imagining her. After years of searching he found her; she was breathing still.

"Miriam."

Lass

Chapter Notes

Uhm. This chapter got really dark. With that being said, here's my list

-mentions of kidnapping
-mentions of brainwashing
-manipulation
-trauma descriptions
-mentions of dismemberment
-graphic descriptions of suicide

Please know if you are struggling there are a variety of resources here for you! Your mental health matters! If you need a real person to talk to that isn't a hotline, My DMS are open always <3. Mwah Mwah you are loved <3

The fake arm was cold against her skin. Its existence against what remained of the limb was alien and unnatural. She knew she would never get used to having only her non-dominant arm, but the combination of durable plastics and metals felt like adding insult to injury. There was nothing about it that sat right with her, but she allowed two doctors to fasten it in place against the surgical nub where her right arm was.

She knew it was meant to be a freedom restored to her, but she couldn’t help but feel like she was being robbed yet again. The Chesapeake Ripper had told her what he would take from her. She knew he would take his arm and gently sew it onto another body. She was told that he would take a thin layer of skin and a few strands of hair to embed in the fingernails of another victim. At least with the Ripper she knew what would become of her. The cold metal and the straps wrapped around her chest to secure it was a sign that there would be no knowing what came next. She knew what the Ripper intended to take from her, but she had no way of knowing what the ripper would give her in return. Would he allow her to have a normal life now that she was free of him?

After she was assisted into the arm by the two unknown doctors, she was left alone in a room. It was small, cozy even. A deep brown futon was in a corner of the room pressed against the pastel yellow wallpaper. Fake flowers in glass vases littered the various tables throughout the room. Why the vases had real water within them was a mystery, but she didn’t question it. A large painting of a foreign moth was displayed above an electric fireplace. There was no evidence pointing towards anyone ever living there, but it was intentionally made homey.

There was a window to Miriam's right, but she kept it covered by the black curtain. Though she was grateful to see the sun again, her eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness enveloping her. The darkness of the room provided her eyes with some security, but very little. The remaining security was given to her when she buried herself in a corner of the room between the end of a small sofa and the nearest wall. She used a stack of books that she found to barricade the only opening to the small space.

She hated the small spaces at first. Claustrophobia was something she didn't know she had until she found herself at the bottom of the well. She often felt it choking her and threatening to be the very death of her. In the first few days of captivity she clawed at the walls around her in hopes of escape. She clawed until her nails snapped into small jagged pieces and her fingers began to bleed from the coarseness of the world around her. And when she couldn't climb she sobbed and begged to be let out of the small dark hole. At one point she begged to die simply so her mutilated remains could escape the well. The Ripper denied her that mercy. After awhile the darkness became familiar and the tight space became comforting. The Chesapeake Ripper had taken her arm but restored her amygdala to her.

With her back to the wall and her knees to her chest, Miriam closed her eyes to escape the warm lighting of the room. She could feel the presence of a familiar man approaching her, but she kept her eyes shut nonetheless. She didn't want to lose the cover of darkness.

"Miriam." The voice called sweetly to her. The voice was calm and soothing. It was paternal even, like a father comforting their broken child. The tone in which he spoke was distinct enough to tell her who the source of the voice was without ever looking at him.

"Agent Crawford sir." She replied, the engraved formality slipping through her lips against her will.

"I think we both are past the formalities, Miriam." He commented briefly before he sat himself on the other side of the book wall, "how are you feeling?"

"I'm fine Jack." She quickly answered, "really."

"This doesn't seem very fine." He began as he most likely gestured to her confined situation, "why don't you tell me what happened so I can help you."

“I can’t tell you anything. I remember being awake, and then asleep, and then awake again.”

She opened her eyes at the sound of rustlng paper being gently being organized and written on. She took away a single book to lock eyes with Jack at the other side. He gave a light and deeply saddened smile before he looked at the other man present with her.

He was familiar, but she couldn’t exactly put a finger on who he was. She couldn’t even remember his name. His facial structure produced fear, like her body had a horrid memory attached to his face. He made her uncomfortable by simply being present. He glared at her, as if he were threatening her. What he was threatening, she didn’t know, but the threat was there all the same. There was a clear purpose behind it, but she couldn’t figure out what it was. Had they known each other prior to being taken? She couldn’t remember and she didn’t dare to offend him by asking.

“When you were awake, what did you see Miss Lass?” The familiar man asked.

Miriam thought for a moment, desperately trying to recall everything that she could.

“A man. I- I couldn’t see his face. The lights made him more like a silhouette. They were always flashing. He spoke to me, told me exactly what he would do to me, but I don’t remember his voice.”

Jack looked at the familiar man before looking back at her. His face was uneasy and riddled with suspicion. She doubted that it was directed at her, especially since she was the “victim” in this situation. It was most likely directed towards the familiar man speaking to her. She couldn’t grasp why; he seemed like a decent man. The wedding band that he kept twisting said that he was at least decent enough to take a wife.

“You’re married. What’s her name?” Miriam asked.

“William. Why do you ask?”

“You’re married…. To a man? We can do that now?” Miriam asked, her brows furrowed in confusion towards the phenomenon.

“Indeed we can. The law passed recently. A few months ago to be more precise. We were wed two days after its legalization.”

“I—….” Her voice trailed off.

“Miriam, are you alright?” Jack asked.

“I—…. I can finally marry her. Jack, can you get me a phone? I need to call Mandy. Tell her I’m alive and tell her the good news.” Miriam begged, her voice both excited and desperately pleading.

Jack’s eyes trailed towards the floor and he began to hang his head. Hannibal after a moment mirrored the behavior in realization.

“Jack?” Miriam asked, her brow no longer furrowed and her tone changing to concern.

“Mandeline Draagos is dead, Miriam.” Jack softly explained as he took Miriam’s hand, “We had a funeral for you about a year ago. She was barely holding herself together. Wasn’t eating. Wasn’t sleeping. I- I didn’t see the signs. She left her badge on her dining room table and a bullet in her mouth. She was trying to get back to you. We all were.”

“No. She wouldn’t.” Miriam said as shook her head and let out a nervous laugh. Her voice cracked and broke alongside her composure. Tears began to well in her eyes, “Mandy wouldn’t. She’s a tough woman. She wouldn’t. She— she would've found him at least. She wouldn’t kill herself. He must’ve found her first. She wouldn’t kill herself.”

Hannibal smirked slightly in silent confirmation of her words, but covered it with his usual neutral expression before she could see it, “You shared a love with Mandy. From what I can digest, she seemed like a wonderful woman. I would’ve loved to have you both for dinner. It’s a shame that the circumstances wouldn’t allow it.”

“You aren’t listening to me!” Miriam screamed, “She wouldn’t have done it! That’s not who she is!”

Jack let out a sigh, “then help us avenge her by catching the Ripper. Do you think you can do that?”

Miriam nodded in response, her bones still fuming with both rage and devastation. Her body felt weaker under the weight of Mandy’s death,but also greatly fuming with fury. She wanted to scream. She wanted to throw something. She wanted to make the Ripper bleed for what he had done. She wanted to stack the books higher and press her body harder against the wall. If given the choice, she might even crawl back into the well in hopes that it would take her back to Mandy. The Chesapeake Ripper had taken the world from her.

“I’m going to kill him.” She breathed between the tears that began to flow down her cheeks. Not even rage could stop the river of grief that escaped her eyes.

Jack believed that she was angered by her own grief, but she meant what she said. If she saw the Ripper and recognized him, she would kill him. It was as simple as that. She couldn’t and wouldn’t negotiate with him. She wouldn’t allow the risk of a trial. She could not allow him to see prison. Prison was too good for him. Life was too good for him. He had to die and she was sure of that. As she wiped away her continuously flowing tears she swore that she would kill the Chesapeake Ripper. She didn’t care what would follow after his death as long as he was dragged into the unforgiving gates of hell where he belonged.

“Memories can be recovered just as easily as they are taken. The lights blinded you, but they can also be the instrument needed to see. It’s an unorthodox way to recover what was buried by the mind, but it is easily the most effective.” Hannibal interrupted as he sat himself on the small sofa beside Miriam.

She shook her head frantically as she slowly set aside another book. Then a third book followed, “I don’t care. Whatever helps to catch him.”

Jack and Hannibal nodded. They both looked to each other, seemingly in mutual understanding before they both stood again. They both reached a hand out to Miriam to help her up from her small confined corner.

At first Miriam went to take Hannibal's hand. It seemed to be the softer and more comforting of the two provided to her. Jack Crawford was too coarse and almost unfeeling. Hannibal seemed to have more gentleness and care put into everything he did. She could read that side of him based entirely on his neat seat and his perfectly styled hair. He had a great attention to detail. She went to take his hand but froze. A brief wave of fear fell through her body. She could feel as it crashed through her like a stone crashing onto the glass. Her gut was desperately trying to warn her against him, yet she had no memory of why. It was a frustrating thing, but she trusted her gut and took Jack's hand instead. He carefully pulled her up before he disappeared from the room.

At first Hannibal didn't speak to Miriam. He simply rearranged the furniture within the room. He set two chairs across from each other and put a coffee table behind them. He set a third chair, presumably for Jack, next to the coffee table. She took a seat in one of the two closer chairs and Hannibal mirrored her. Upon sitting he swung one leg over the other and wrapped his folded hands around his knee. She sat still with the exception of her feverish tapping of her right foot.

"There's no need for such anxiousness around me Miss Lass," Hannibal began in an attempt to break the silence, "Jack has hidden cameras throughout the room. Anything and everything is recorded. You're safe."

"I don't *feel* safe. Something about you keeps triggering fear. I don't know why. I can't remember why." she explained.

"Memory has a strong correlation to emotion. Even when we cannot remember an event we can still remember the feelings associated with them. Perhaps my appearance or my accent reminds you of the Ripper and your body is trying to protect you."

"That's exactly what I think it is. How did you know that?"

"I've practiced psychiatry for a very long time. It has become one of the pleasures of my life."

“I think the Ripper was a psychiatrist. I- I remember visiting him. He–.. He wore a suit too.”

“And you cannot picture his face?”

There was a brief pause, “No. I can’t.”

Hannibal smirked slightly and quickly hid it yet again. It was a slight comfort to know that the face was unknown to him. Though he wouldn’t allow himself to admit it, he enjoyed knowing that he was safe. He was completely free from the persecution of the confused blonde woman. She was physically incapable of exposing him for what he was.

Jack returned to the room holding a contraption alien to Miriam, and a warm tea. He set both on the table and slid the tea towards the girl. Hannibal carefully switched the contraption on and a light began to flash from it. The small clocklikehand in front of it began to swing side to side. Miriam’s eyes latched onto the motions and engulfed herself in it. Like a leap off a diving board and into the depths of a pool, she allowed herself to drown in the lights and the sounds.

“This metronome will help your past into your consciousness. In a moment, you’ll be able to see and hear what you had before. With some luck, we can uncover who it was that confined you to the well.”

She nodded, her mind already slipping back into the darkness she was in not too long ago. She could barely comprehend what she was told; she felt almost high under the influence of the flashing lights.

The corners of her eyes faded to black, and the rest of her vision followed. She could hear the condensation water echoing as it dropped down each brick. A man with a deep voice was talking in a muffled tone to another man with a higher muffled tone. The darkness surrounded her, enveloping her in what felt like an inevitable death. Each breath she took felt borrowed, and the Grim Ripper would eventually come to collect.

“Where are you?” An echoing voice asked her. She looked around for the source but only found the overwhelming black world around her.

“I- I don’t know where I am.” She replied at last, her voice stuck with newfound panic.

“What do you see?”

“I can’t *see* anything.” She continued, almost as if a knife was to her throat and she was following the script in front of her, “I was so wrong. I was so wrong. I don’t want to die like this!!”

As the tears began to well in her eyes Hannibal shut off the metronome. Jack waved a hand in front of her face and called out to her in an attempt to snap her back into reality. It took a moment, but the darkness covering her eyes slowly faded away. After a few moments of rapidly blinking, her consciousness could see both men in the room with her and the tea on the table in the travel mug.

The two men looked at each other in silent understanding as the woman grabbed the tea and nervously sipped it. None of them needed to utter a word in order to understand that they were no better off than they started. They tormented the girl in an attempt to gain information or a clue into who the ripper was, yet they were still in the same place they were before. There wasn’t a single clue as to who the Chesapeake Ripper was besides the clues they already had.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t help Jack.” Miriam said at last.

“Don’t worry about it,” Jack replied, “just-.. just try to get some rest ok? We might need you again.”

Miriam nodded and stood from the chair. She took her mug of tea and laid herself on the nearest couch. She set her mug on the ground as she swung her legs onto the couch with her. She rested her head against the cushioned arm and gently closed her eyes in begging for peaceful sleep. After a moment her body deemed her worthy of the slumber, and her senses succumbed to it at long last.

“She mentioned to me that the man wore a suit. He knew about this technique of brainwashing. One cannot help but feel a sense of suspicion towards those within his own field based on these vague details.”

“You think it's..” Jack began.

“Indeed I do. Doctor Chilton is the only unorthodox man I know that fits the descriptions of the Ripper. I fear it may be him.”

—-

The Baltimore Hospital for the criminally insane was not Will’s ideal place to spend his evening, yet he was there anyway. It was just as miserable as he remembered it to be, and the company was equally awful. The only solace Will had was the fact that when the sun set he wouldn’t have to return to the small confined cell. And of course, there was some comfort in the death of Matthew Brown. He found the asylum quite unbearable before these comforts, but now it had become tolerable to some extent.

Then the sight of Frederick Chilton changed his mind.

As the man in the suit opened the door to his office, Will’s mood immediately declined into something more infuriated. Both Chilton and Lounds had that effect on him. Combined with the fear from the other times he visited the office, Will wasn’t exactly what people called a ‘happy camper’. He was pissed that he even had to be back, but he was anxious for the conversation to come. Together they didn’t necessarily mix.

He considered screaming at Hannibal or even punching him later for making him come back to this pocket of hell that managed to escape onto earth, but he knew it was the only way for their plan to work. While Hannibal used Miriam to turn Jack towards Chilton, Will had to be the one to make the man look undeniably guilty. The roles couldn’t reverse. This was the only way in which the events could unfold. This is their only possible design.

Will might've been toying with his wedding ring when he entered the room, which he wore on a necklace beneath his shirt for the time being, had it not been for the required secrecy of their relationship. He needed to fidget with something— anything— to help the anxious feeling stirring within him. It was a habit bestowed upon him in childhood, but like all other bad habits this one also refused to die. He found himself pinching and scratching at the skin on the finger that the ring belonged on when he sat across from Chilton. A simple gesture that seemed meaningless, but as the small space of skin began to feel raw against his touch it felt more damaging than intended.

"And to what or whom do I owe the pleasure?" Chilton asked Will as he shut the door behind him and made his way to his designated seat.

"The Chesapeake Ripper." Will blandly replied. He stuck his left hand under his leg to prevent himself from scraping his damaged skin on his ring finger.

Chilton's usual sly expression was quickly dropped and traded for a deeply concerned frown. They had never discussed the man outright, which meant the topic was most likely something fatal to either or both of them.

"I take it that he's enlisted your help." Chilton assumed as he folded his hands over his desk, "And you're offering me my last words before you go in for the kill."

"Quite the opposite. Hannibal Lecter and I's union is kept separate from his… other work. That being said, I've come to warn you." Will elucidated.

"Warn me of what, exactly?"

"You're next. You've made your way to the top of his list."

"And what sins," Frederick asked snarkily, "Have I committed exactly? I've made nothing but a clear effort to avoid the man's schemes."

“He considers it rude that you undid his art.” Will explained as coldly and disconnected as he could, “You stripped the paint of my false memories from the canvas of my mind. You showed the burns within it. You dabbled in matters not meant for you. Like Prometheus stole fire from the gods, you stole my mind from him. Like Prometheus, the god believes you are deserving of proper penance.”

A light nervous laughter escaped Chilton’s lips, but it was quickly silenced. For a moment he simply stared at Will as he tried to grasp whether or not he was bluffing. He had done a great deal of wrongs in his lifetime, but none were direct crimes against The Chesapeake Ripper. He made Abel Gideon believe that he was the Ripper for a time, which would’ve provided the real one a cloak of lies to take cover under. He kept Will Graham imprisoned, which kept Will from killing him for the most part. The only thing that he had done to work against the Ripper was restoring Will’s memories. In his defense, he believed Will to be the Ripper just as the rest of the FBI did. Besides, it was Will’s fault as much as it was his. Why would Hannibal not seek out revenge on Will Graham for his treachery? Why only him? It didn’t exactly add up, but he was more concerned with his life at the moment than he was logic.

“You’re not here just to tell me that I’m on a hit list,” Chilton began at last, “you’re here to tell me how I can avoid it.”

“I am.” Will confirmed.

“Well,” Chilton paused and threw one of his hands out in an antsy gesture, “get on with it then.”

“Run.”

Chilton stared blankly at Will for a moment. Surely this was not his grand plan. There had to be something else that Will Graham was willing to give that would ensure his survival.

“Get as far away from Baltimore as you can. Do it before nightfall. Jack could protect you, but he won’t. He thinks you are too much of a slime for that. Don’t even waste your time packing. Take a passport and find a corner of the world in which you feel safest. There is no other way in which you can survive this.”

Chilton considered the words again. It was such an oddity to him. The situation raised a variety of suspicions, yet he couldn't help but get a sense of fear from the words. If Will was telling the truth, then Chilton was on a very short time limit. If he was lying, then he'd abandon everything for nothing. Then again, it didn't necessarily need to be permanent.

"He's hunting me because of my work to retrieve your memories from his clutches. You had just as much a hand in that as I did, so why just me? Why is he not going after you?"

"Because he wants to be my friend."

The Patsy

Chapter Notes

Oddly enough, this chapter is a bit on the more tame side in terms of triggers

-mentions of dismemberment
-mentions of murder
-mentions of blood
-very slightly suggestive dialogue. like it's a whole 2 sentences.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If he was smart, Frederick might've fled the state immediately after his conversation with Will. He should've fled. Every second he waited to run was another step closer that his predator was to annihilating him entirely. However, that didn't stop him from completing his ever-shortening list of tasks at the hospital.

He set aside a list of duties for the person who would temporarily, or perhaps permanently if he didn't develop a sense of urgency, take over the hospital in his absence. Of course, he hoped that he would return when all was well and the threat of death wasn't looming over his shoulder. When the paperwork was all filed and squared away, he took his most private documents and shoved them into his briefcase. The Abel Gideon and Will Graham files, more specifically the papers that hinted towards his unorthodox therapies, were among the papers in the briefcase. If he were to die, he would die a good and noble man. No one besides him and his killer would ever have proof of his abuse.

The drive to his expensive modern home was silent. He didn't play his usual jazz or hyper feminine music in the car; there was no desire for it. He only sat and kept his attention on the road as a desperate distraction from what could potentially unfold.

His phone buzzed on the passenger seat of his car next to his briefcase. He let it ring and ring until it fell silent again. There was a brief moment in which Chilton could only hear the heater as the air blasted into the small space around him. Then the phone began to ring again. Chilton ripped a hand from the wheel and snatched the phone from the seat. He read the name on the phone. It was James, his boyfriend– or rather his ex boyfriend now. He had chosen a woman over their undeniable love. Chilton immediately shut down his phone and

threw it back to the passenger seat. He was not in the mood for James' bullshit today;especially not today.

"Fuck you." he muttered to himself and the phone as it bounced off the seat and onto the nearby floor of the car.

The matter seemed more trivial in comparison to his life, but he didn't care. He wanted to keep the peace without his last moments of peace being destroyed by his antics. He wanted to be free and sane just a moment longer.

He parked his car in the driveway and took a brief moment to breathe. The phone was off, and in a few moments he would disappear. The end of his Baltimore life was near.

He walked into the house with his black cane in hand, and began to rummage through his belongings. He didn't eat; he couldn't even look at food without thinking of the end rapidly approaching him. He could only decide which of his clothes he would abandon and which he would take with him. His watches, his expensive accessories, and other material objects had no place in the one suitcase he could manage to bring. His wallet was always full of cash and kept neatly in his pocket, so he didn't worry about packing it. He only cared about the necessities, like his custom tailored suits.

The bag didn't take long to pack. A piece of his mind always knew it would happen eventually. Of course, he didn't expect to flee in order to protect himself from a killer, but he knew he would eventually have to flee the state.

As he made his way down the hall with his suitcase in hand, there was a light and polite knocking on the door. There were no words or sounds that followed. There was no indication as to who or what was at his door. He expected it to be James. Usually when he and James fought he would apologize at his doorstep with flowers. He was a romantic that way. However, this time it felt more alarming. There was no indication that it was him at the door, and Chilton wasn't trying to confirm or deny that it was James at the door. The person at the door, whoever they may be, would be like Schrodinger's cat; unknown until the door was opened to reveal them.

The cat had other plans. It had grown tired of being ignored. It began to slam itself against the door like a battering ram. The loud banging against the wood was sudden and only lasted

a second. It would go silent; not a single sound escaping from the front porch. Then the loud thudding started again. It paused. It started. It paused again. It was strategically done to freeze him in fear. Chilton of all people knew that. He knew the anxiety and anxiousness combined with the slightly intrigued sense would lock him into an entranced state. The loud banging against the door would have almost the same effect as the swinging pocket watch or the spiral screens. The Chesapeake Ripper, assuming that it was him that is, knew it too.

Eventually the door fell somewhat off its hinges. One more blow and it would come flying at Chilton. Yet the door was not hit. It was left where it lay for one moment. Then two. Then three. Frederick Chilton couldn't find the strength to peel himself away despite knowing that he should. His primal survival instincts were always very poor.

Then the door, just like he expected, flew towards him; landing just barely in front of his own feet.

He let out a sigh of relief at the sight of the Chesapeake Ripper's feet, "Thank god you're not my ex."

He perked his head slightly sideways in confusion, "I could call him, or you could run. The choice is yours."

It was at that moment he decided to take his cane and run the best that he could. He could hear the swishing of the plastic suit behind him, but he didn't dare to turn around and face it. He knew that soon, if not already, the police would be contacted. The collapse of his door would summon them rather quickly. All he had to do was survive until then.

His damaged body betrayed him. It couldn't anywhere near as quickly as the Chesapeake Ripper's did. The man was swift, unyielding even. He was persistence and determination personified into one horrid beast. He couldn't make it out of the house if the man had any of his senses.

Chilton limped towards the kitchen and turned on his stove. The flames began to pour out, so he found the nearest flammable object and set it on top before running again. The smoke wasn't much, but it was just enough to provide temporary cover.

The Ripper laughed at his feeble attempt at distraction, “Why do you waste your time and my own delaying the inevitable?”

Then the Lithuanian hand grabbed him from behind and shoved him onto the ground. Chilton stumbled for a moment in a desperate attempt to stand, but was met with the same hand grabbing the collar of his shirt and dragging him towards the fridge. The hand slammed him against it and used a pair of pink handcuffs with fuzz to lock him to the handle.

“I do apologize for the suggestive use of restraints. I couldn’t risk marks being left on your wrist, and these are the only others that my husband and I keep.”

The Lithuanian man turned away and stood just behind the open doorway. When the police inevitably came, they would die. Chilton couldn’t stand the idea of watching. He simply slumped with his hand against the fridge and closed his eyes. Perhaps he could use his lack of vision to prove his own evidence.

—-

When his eyes opened again he was covered in blood and his restraints were removed. His first instinct was to look around for Hannibal Lecter, but was found with the room littered with the corpses of the people who were meant to save him. He could only think about how screwed he was.

He pulled himself up and ran. He needed to find Will Graham. Though the man was wrong, perhaps he could still protect him.

—-

Chilton showed up at Will’s doorstep right on time. The second that Hannibal warned him of where Chilton would be headed, Will had prepared. He purposely kept the blinds off the windows so the dogs would tell him when the man arrived. He had some purposely butchered dish from Lecter’s to make it seem like he wasn’t actively waiting for Chilton. And when the man arrived Will’s part of the plan would unfold.

And almost on cue, the dogs began to bark at the window and the front door like an alert that danger was near. Naturally, as if it were an old habit that refused to die, Will opened the door for his anxious dogs. They immediately bolted outside and surrounded the man on the porch. They jumped onto him and licked at the blood on his gray dress shirt. They had become all too familiar with the sweet taste of the spilled crimson. They had learned to take a liking to it. It was odd to see his pack reflecting the bloodlust of their person. It was almost concerning to the curly-haired brunette. Like a parent would protect their children from the horrors of the world, like he maimed and killed and manipulated for the sake of Abigail's safety, he had hoped that the corruption did not rub onto his dogs. They were good, calm, and loving. They should never have learned the sweet scent of blood.

When Will stepped outside and shut the door, the dogs heeled and fled back to his side.

"You were wrong." Chilton began, "may I borrow your shower?"

Will nodded and opened the door for both the men and the dogs in silent invitation.

Chilton followed the dogs into the small house, "He's not trying to kill me."

Will nodded, "bathroom is down the hall on the right. There's a blue sweater and some pants in one of the cabinets. Same for towels."

Frederick gave a fake smile and separated himself from Graham's side.

He returned to Will and found warm tea and a small steak, if it even was a real steak, on the table in the living room. Chilton chose to ignore them both out of precaution and laid the stained clothes next to them.

"He didn't intend to kill me." Frederick Chilton began, "He took pink handcuffs from your bedroom and locked me against his fridge while he turned my house into a crime scene."

“Of course he did,” Will sighed. He put a hand to his forehead in silent annoyance, “Leave it to Hannibal Lecter to make framing you about me.”

“You knew he would do this.”

“I didn’t.”

“How could you not? He and I have the same profile. Same medical and psychological background. We both are doctors of note in our field. Of course it would be me!” Chilton yelled as he packed some of Will’s clothes into one of Will’s duffel bags. Will didn’t want them anymore and Chilton had none for his escape.

With his back turned, Will had the opportunity he needed. Jack Crawford had already been called while Chilton was in the shower, but now he had the opportunity to record. If anything would happen to him, which he doubted, at least his death could be used to point another finger at Chilton. One last sacrifice towards the safety of Abigail Hobbs, and by default, her other father as well.

“Hannibal was never going to kill me. I’m his… patsy! I-…” Frederick paused for a moment, “I have to leave the country. Not just the state.”

“If you run now you’ll look guilty. He’s counting on you running.” Will protested.

“I’ve already fled one crime scene, what's one more. Besides, you stayed and you looked plenty guilty.” Chilton explained. “He left Abel Gideon half-eaten in my guest room. It looks like I killed two— no three— police officers. Or maybe they were agents. I didn’t stick around to find out. Either way they’re dead. All you did was throw up an ear and they damned you. Imagine what they will do to me. If they don’t shoot me on sight then they’ll definitely give me the chair.”

“They’ve probably canceled your credit cards. They’re most likely tracing your phone as we speak.”

“I have cash,” Chilton explained as he zipped the duffel bag, “and I already tossed my phone.”

There was a brief pause.

“I’m going to prove that Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper. Stay here until I do.”

“I know that you will. And when you do, I’d prefer to read it from a secure location *away* from here. I’ll introduce myself to society then.”

The dogs began to bark at the door as a black car pulled into the driveway. At the sound of the gravel against the tires Chilton snapped his head over to Graham

“What have you done?” Chilton panickingly asked

“I called Jack.” Will replied, his tone even and unfeeling.

“No. No no no no no.” Chilton began, his voice and his hands shaking at the thought of capture.

Will went to stand, but quickly refrained from it when Chilton raised the gun that he kept hidden and pointed it at him.

“Stay there!” Chilton shouted.

Will had not anticipated the gun, but he didn’t care. He knew Chilton well. He was a crooked and unorthodox man who only cared for himself, but he would not fire the gun. Will was perfectly safe.

“You’re not a killer Frederick.” he commented coldly as he stood and turned away.

He made his way to the door and opened it for Jack.

“He’s out back, or rather is about to be.” Will answered before Jack could ask.

“I thought he was in the house with you.” Jack replied.

“Heard your car. Slipped out the back door while you’re talking to me. He can’t go far, especially after what Gideon did to him. You could catch him before he has the chance to hide.”

Jack nodded, “Stay here in case he comes back.”

Chilton, who was sneaking out the back door like Will had predicted, had heard the comment that Jack made. He wasn’t exactly quiet about it. He knew his odds of escaping were easily sliced in half if they weren’t even ripped from him entirely. He couldn’t watch them search the woods while he hid at the side of the house. He couldn’t take Jack’s car. He had to travel on foot.

He had long since abandoned his cane; he didn’t need it now. He needed to run.

He ran through the cold winter forest in hopes of losing Jack in the trees. He lept over fallen branches and kicked up the leftover snow behind him like a fearful deer. He didn’t look back at first. He continued to keep his face forward even as he heard the shuffling of the agent behind him.

Jack shouted something, but Chilton didn’t hear it. He didn’t hear the safety of Jack’s gun as it clicked off. He only heard the bullet that fired in his direction. It missed; it was meant to miss. It was a warning shot. It lodged itself into a nearby branch, which shattered the bark and sent pieces flying in Frederick’s direction.

To protect himself he had put an arm over his eyes. And in his protective blindness, he tripped on another branch. He tried to quickly pull himself up, but was met with Jack's gun clicking behind him.

Another bullet was ready to fire right into his head.

One wrong move and he was a dead man.

Did he run? Did he fight back in hopes of dying now a martyr, or did he allow himself to be taken so he could die later as a damned man?

The only option he had was to hope Will Graham exposed the real Chesapeake Ripper to Crawford.

He sat up and raised both hands in surrender. To become a hostage was his only chance of survival, or even freedom for that matter.

"Frederick Chilton," Jack Crawford shouted as he threw silver handcuffs at him. They had no pink fluff to them; thank goodness, "You're under arrest for the kidnapping, murder, and cannibalization of Abel Gideon."

Chapter End Notes

Hey y'all! I'm gong to just be super real with you guys and say that any consistency I've had writing this will be officially thrown out the window. The A03 curse is on my left and the chaos of my life is on my right. They're actively ganging up on me. On the occasions in which I do write, I physically cannot hold onto a finished chapter for longer than 2 days before I inevitably post.

Long story short, we're moving to a "When I feel like it" schedule. There should be one like per week but probably not all on the same day.

Chilton

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning List:

-death
-shootings
-mentions of captivity
-mentions of hypnosis
-mentions of baby trapping

Orange was not his color. Chilton preferred more muted neutral tones to the vibrant prison orange. They did not match with his dark hair and the shade screamed of indictment. He hated the shade almost as much as he hated Lecter in that moment.

Will had watched as Jack escorted Chilton to the car. His eyes never wavered from the man. It was almost as if he was waiting for Chilton to make a move against him. Will's eyes as Chilton was shoved into the backseat told a story of chess pieces falling under the command of a cruel player. First, the rook's ear had been severed from her head. Then the knight was thinly sliced and put between glass slides. The queen had been manipulated into a standstill of love. Now the bishop would take the heat for the crimes of the cruel player controlling the black side of the board.

And when the car began to pull away from the home in Wolf Trap, Chilton swore he saw a smile painted onto Will's face.

The brunette watched as the car sped off into the distance, which allowed him entry back into his home again. The dogs on the other side of the door were staring eagerly at their person and wondering what had happened to the bloodstained man that was present only a moment ago. They silently wondered out of hunger. They didn't care for the person itself.

Will understood that and gave them pieces of the leftover "steak" that his husband gave him to help sell his lack of involvement in Chilton's arrest. It was meant to make him look preoccupied when the man arrived, but now it served as a snack for his pack of dogs. They

all, like Will, had learned to accept the taste of finer meats not meant for their rugged lifestyle. The dogs accepted it more than him.

While the dogs tore at their pieces of the meat, Will left the house and got into his own car. It was a matter of time before he was called back to Crawford, so he decided to get ahead of the call. Besides, if he didn't then he would have to drive about two hours to reach Jack, and he knew the man didn't have that kind of patience.

As he backed out of the driveway and left the dogs staring back at him through the windows, he decided to make a quick call to Hannibal. He wasn't sure if the man would pick up since he was technically working, but it was worth the attempt.

One ring.Two rings. "Hello Will."

Will drove in silence, slightly shocked by the fact that he had actually answered the phone.

"Mylimasis?" the man on the other end of the phone called. His voice was neutral and unfeeling on the surface, but Will could easily read the hint of worry that would've gone unnoticed by anyone else.

"Hey. Sorry, I didn't expect you to answer. Are you busy? I can call back later." Will answered at last.

"No, I have a few minutes. I just finished a session with a new patient. Mr. Jame Gumb just left, and I have a few more minutes before Mrs. Crawford arrives. How May I help you?"

"They just took Chilton into custody. I'm making my way over to where they'll be holding him."

"And I take it Miriam will be present to identify him?"

“Given that she didn’t recognize you somehow when you did your brainwashing thing on her, most likely.”

“I didn’t brainwash her, Will. Jack allowed me to make an attempt against the brainwashing already done. I find it cruel that you would assume such things.”

“Yeah whatever.” Will snapped, “And after Mrs. Crawford?”

“I have a session with Miss Margot Verger. Why do you ask?”

“I’d like to come over. You and I have a lot to discuss.”

“Will we actually be talking or will you be pointing things at me?”

“Depends, would you prefer that I did?”

“Perhaps at another time. May I request my home for tonight? Be there around eight o’clock?”

“It’s a date.” Will confirmed just as his phone began to buzz. Jack was calling, right on schedule. He declined his call and at the nearest red light he sent a text telling the man that he was on his way.

At that same light Will turned right. As he turned he pressed his foot to the gas to keep up with the flow of traffic. He drove on that road only for a moment before he exited onto a highway.

“Perhaps we could watch that movie that you recommended. Saw was it? I did some research and I think our hawk would enjoy it.”

“I’d rather not. We live in enough of a horror film. We don’t need to add to it with that movie. How about Pride and Prejudice?”

“As in the novel by Jane Austen? It was turned to film?”

“Yeah: it was almost a decade ago. Do you live under a rock?”

“I prefer to occupy myself with literature and culinary arts. Film is the least of my concerns.”

There was a brief silence, “fuck you too.” Will muttered.

“I beg your pardon?”

“Nothing darling.” Will quickly replied.

The silence found them again. This silent moment was longer and more drawn out than the first. Will kept eyes locked on the road instead of on the phone that his husband was connected to. He wasn’t worried about the man’s presence on the screen. He wouldn’t leave without saying goodbye.

He could hear movement in Hannibal’s office, like the rearranging of files and furniture. Will didn’t question it; there were more odd matters than the changing of scenery in his room.

“Do you think you could teach me Lithuanian sometime?”

“I apologize, I believe I misheard you. Repeat that for me please Mylimasis.”

“Could you teach me Lithuanian?”

Hannibal didn't reply for a moment. There was no rustling. There was no motion. There was no sign of life on the other end of the line.

"Hannibal?"

"My apologies I-.." he paused, "I didn't expect you to take an interest in it."

"Maybe we should. It gives us a third language to hide behind."

"Very well. Do you know any of it?"

"Basic phrases. Greetings, simple sentences, how to say 'I love you', stuff like that."

Will could almost feel the man's stomach dropping. His empathy disorder was an odd thing; it never needed the person physically present to know what they felt or had felt. It was often a curse, but in this instance it was nothing short of a blessing. It allowed him to feel what the usually emotionless man felt. He was good at masking himself, but Will had a way of cracking that mask and revealing little pieces of his human nature. It was his skill; his craft. Even when the man tried to hide behind his suits and his rambles about food, he could see the man– feel the man– as if he were hiding behind a sheet of glass.

The man took a deep breath, then slowly exhaled, "How long have you known the phrase?"

Will's lips curled into a smile, "since before Isley. And Tier. I've been teaching myself since you told me it was your first language."

There was silence on the other end. Will could tell the silence was made from nervousness and not business. The man on the other end of the phone was worried that the words would never be reciprocated. In his own way, his own language, he had told Will that he was loved. He was worried that the torment that he had put Will through for the sake of Abigail and

himself would make the man feel a sense of obligation to them over a sense of love for him. Could Will, after all that has become of their previously simple lives, love Hannibal?

“Don’t worry. Aš tave melié too.” Will continued, this time his tone softer; like a caress of his breath against Hannibal’s skin.

There was no sigh of relief. There was no evidence to even suggest that the worry ever existed within Hannibal. It was almost unsettling how neutral his expression was to being told he was loved in his own first language. There was no relief. There was no joy. There was no excitement or critique of Will’s southern accent as it slipped through the words. There was nothing but silence.

“Mano širdis,” Hannibal cooed through the phone, “Mano melie. Mano didžiausias džiaugsmas.”

“I didn’t get all of that.” Will admitted after a brief pause.

“You will in time.” Hannibal replied, “My next patient should be here any second now, I’m afraid I must leave you now. I’ll see you tonight, my mylimasis. Aš tave melié.”

The phone beeped to signal the disconnection of the line. Will was once again met with the silence within his car. He didn’t mind; it allowed him a brief moment to think about the moment that occurred. He managed to speak Lithuanian. He managed to shock Hannibal, the man who managed to take everything, even the very alignment of the planets, into account when he did anything. The man was caught off-guard by it, which shocked them both. Will had half-expected him to already be aware.

And in return the man had whispered sweet nothings through the phone with the knowledge that Jack Crawford could, and most likely would, keep record of the conversation.

He had told Will that he loved him before when they were together, but this was another thing entirely. Their otherwise private relationship was brought into the spotlight with a few simple words in a foreign language. Hannibal was admitting that he loved Will before the whole FBI. It almost felt as if he was admitting to his weakness. He was acknowledging that

he would crumble at the command of Will Graham and surrender himself if need be. He'd allow himself a life in a cell if it pleased Will. He was expressing his love and defenselessness for his husband to both Will Graham and the FBI, and it felt intentional.

He was handing the FBI the Chesapeake Ripper's personal kryptonite.

He was daring Jack Crawford to use it against him.

Will smiled at the thought. Clever Hannibal, he was always the type to give purpose to everything. He made Will forget their life for the sake of Abigail Hobbs. He forced Will into the cell to force the man into hating him while he protected their daughter. He freed him to make him a queen in both Lecter's chess and Crawford's checkers alike. He sent Randall Tier knowing that it would stain Will and force him into accepting Hannibal. He kept Abigail in the attic to keep Will hooked on the idea of a family with them both. He had Abigail direct him to the warehouse so Will would be damned alongside him. He told Will that he loved him as a way of keeping him addicted to the thrill of him. Hannibal said again it now as a method of taunting Jack Crawford later when Will inevitably ran away with him. Everything that Hannibal Lecter did was with the intention of chaining Will Graham to him.

And Will allowed himself to be chained.

He cursed himself for coming to this realization so late. So much could've been avoided had he not gone along so easily with the man's schemes. How dare he hope for family.

But it was too late to back out now. There was nothing he could do but hope that he managed to make it to the other side of the war that Hannibal had put him in the crossfire of.

He chose not to dwell on the matter any longer. To do so would only make him angrier than he already was. Besides, he was already parking his car just outside the headquarters.

He turned off the engine just after he parked in his usual spot, and then slowly crawled out of the car. He slammed the door shut and locked his car before heading insane.

He usually would greet the people as he passed them, but not today. His usual awkward smile or his queer waves towards the other agents were missing now. The tension towards what was to come and the anger towards the past had consumed his usual mannerisms now. He was nothing but a raging shell of himself despite every attempt to remain calm.

Jack was waiting for him just outside one of the interrogation rooms. Jack held the same expression of guilt, frustration, and triumph that he had when Will Graham was in Frederick Chilton's position not too long ago.

"I was hoping to have you here in order to put this whole thing to rest. Miriam is going to identify him and hopefully this'll all be over. The evidence is right in front of us Will." Jack explained as he held the door open for Will.

"There is no resting as long as *he's* still alive, Jack." Will snapped back before he walked through the door held out for him.

Will found a chair in a corner, which he immediately took and settled into. He didn't acknowledge the blonde woman standing in the middle of the room with her wide eyes of uneasiness. He didn't want to draw too much attention to himself just in case she remembered his voice while she was concealed deep within the well.

Jack stepped through the door and shut it behind him. Unlike Will, he did not make his way into the corner and take a seat. Instead, he directed the girl's glance over to Will while he watched the man in orange take a seat across from the woman in red.

"Miriam, this is Will Graham." Jack stated as he kept his eyes locked on the people seated on the other side of the glass.

"I've heard about you. Married to doctor Lecter right?" She asked as she held out her right hand to shake, but then swapped it with her left after remembering that she only had her left hand now.

Will shook it gently and gave a slight flash of a smile, "it's more complicated than that, but yes."

“Will and I have differing opinions on who the Chesapeake Ripper is. He’s certain that it’s one person while I’m more or less on the fence. I’m hoping that, whenever you’re ready, you could prove whether or not Will is correct.”

“Cmon Jack. Don’t you think it’s too easy? The second you agree with me another suspect comes into view? Too easy. Too simple for the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Miriam nodded and stepped away from Graham. She turned herself towards the glass but kept her eyes closed. Jack followed her and stood beside her as they both faced Chilton and Bloom on the other side of the glass. Will didn’t bother to move. He has a gut feeling towards the outcome of this moment and didnt care to watch it unfold.

Jack could see the people on the other side of the glass were talking, but he drowned them out for the sake of keeping his eyes locked on Miriam. This moment determined the outcome of the entire investigation. Her words had the ability to close a chapter of his career that took almost a decade. Everything could come to a close with the simple two words.

“Whenever you’re ready.” Jack stated, the hint clear between his words.

Miriam opened her eyes and peered at the man through the glass. His dark hair and neat styling felt familiar and dangerous. He didn’t wear a suit, but it wasn’t needed to recognize the build that he had beneath it. The baggy orange jumpsuit didn’t conceal what he was.

Suddenly, as if it were programmed into her, she finally saw his face among the flashing lights that rushed through the back of her head. She could hear him speaking to her, guiding her mind into the darkness that she was meant to be buried in. She could hear his voice as it echoed down the well to her. She could feel her body shaking and cracking under the pressure of his presence. He couldn’t see her, but she still felt afraid of him.

“It’s him,” She cried out as she buried her face into Jack to hide herself from the other man, “Jack it’s him.”

Jack wrapped an arm around Miriam and glared over at Will. There were no words exchanged between them, but the meaning behind the glance was all too clear. It spoke the words “I told you so” within the iris and the pupil.

Miriam’s tears wet Jack’s suit jacket, and her hand unclipped Jack’s holster.

“Its ok Miriam. You’re safe. He won’t hurt you.” Jack soothingly and softly reminded her, but she didn’t hear him.

She said she would kill him, and she would. The fear would not stop her from achieving that. In fact, it only motivated her more.

She ripped the gun from the holster with her left hand and pointed it at the man in orange just as he began to stand.

With tears still streaming down her face, she pulled the trigger once, twice, three times.

The first two bullets missed; she was using her non-dominant hand after all. The third, however, lodged itself in Frederick Chilton’s eye.

Satisfied with the result, she threw the gun off to the side and got down onto her knees. She raised her hand and prepped for the arrest that she knew would come for her next. There was no avoiding it, she had just killed a man. It could easily be proven that it was premeditated, and Jack would have no choice but to put her on trial or declare her insane. Either way, she would only see iron bars after today.

Jack locked the silver handcuffs around both her real and prosthetic wrists and pulled her to her feet. There were tears in both sets of eyes now. Jack would have to sentence a daughter to her own demise. He wasn’t able to truly save her.

He looked back to Will, who sat unphased in the chair, and was met with a similar glare to the one he gave Will.

The message was clear; there was no need for words. He could see what Will wa saying through the anger.

‘No Jack, I told you.’

A lovers quarrel

Chapter Notes

This chapter is pretty laid back because I have been putting everyone through hell lately. We all deserve a chapter or two of peace. However, there is some slight triggers I'm still gonna mention just in case

-brief mentions of blood
-brief mentions of captivity
-brief mentions of death
-a brief mention of guns
-mentions of homicidal ideations
-probably mentioning something else I forgot. Just pls remember this is a Hannibal fanfiction even the fluff is dark here. ty ty

Hannibal watched as Margot Verger made her way out the patient exit, which was why he was shocked to see her at the entrance again only a moment later with Will Graham.

Will had the salmon shirt that he never parted with when Abigail was in the hospital. It was ugly and he hated it then, but now that it was combined with his neatly combed hair it was much more fashionable. The once atrocious button up shirt was now Hannibal's favorite that he'd seen on Will so far.

He wore it with a pair of black dress pants and dress shoes, but held an overcoat around his arm. His back was to the man and he calmly conversed with the woman in front of him. He and Margot talked openly about the psychiatrist that was watching them, which made Hannibal slightly annoyed.

Will shook the woman's hand after sensing the other man's presence, and then issued her leave. She nodded in understanding before she turned away. She handed Will her coat, and he helped her into it. And with a scandalous wink, she left the two men alone with the wide open doorway between us.

"You don't have an appointment." the psychiatrist explained as the man in the salmon colored shirt turned away from the woman in the distance and towards him.

“I didn’t think I needed one.” Will replied through gritted teeth. His grasp on his coat became stronger and full of an all too familiar anger, “May I come in anyway?”

The psychiatrist could sense the anger immediately. He had spent so much time both avoiding that side of Will and embracing it that he could recognize it in Will before he could recognize his own face in a mirror. Their ties to each other made it impossible to ignore. A simple shift in the way Will held himself around Hannibal told him everything he needed to know. The level of venom within Will’s words was often a giveaway as well. There was no denying that now, it was clear in the way he held himself and the distance he purposely kept between them. Even after saying that he loved Hannibal only a few hours before, it seemed that Will was going back on those foreign words. Despite Will trying to give the illusion of peace between them, the man was angry with Hannibal.

And Will was most dangerous when he was angry.

“Will you be pointing a gun at me?” Hannibal asked in retaliation.

“Not tonight.” Will answered as he walked through the doorway.

He wasn’t going to bother waiting for Hannibal to let him in. He knew the man would always allow him in. Whether it was into his office, his bed, or his heart didn’t matter. Hannibal had a way of always making room for Will in his twisted and horrifying world. He had a way of smothering Will with love and warm adoration while the environment around them was cold and unforgiving. It was circumstantial warmth, made only to ensure his place in the pocket of the world made for him. It was meant only to keep him in place; to keep him from rebelling. Divergence from the path laid out for him by Lecter was not permitted by any means. Divergence would lead to turmoil and death. The man would speak the only language that they alone understood: violence. But for now, there was warmth and comfort designed and crafted specifically for Will Graham alone.

Hannibal trailed behind Will just like any of the dogs might’ve. His eyes were fixated on Will and did not diverge from him, though the area of him that was focused upon had changed frequently. He liked to admire *every* part of the man. He preferred to gaze upon every gloriously beautiful piece of his existence. To do anything else would be rude.

“I thought we agreed upon my home at eight? I wasn’t expecting you.” Hannibal claimed despite the very obvious cleaning and rearrangement of the two chairs in the center of the room beside the gray rug. Will noticed they were kept closer than they usually were, even for them. They practically touched, and forced them by default to touch as well if they were both to be seated. It naturally raised suspicion.

“And I expect Chilton wasn’t expecting to be shot in the face today by a complete stranger, but here we are.” Will snapped back as he sat in one chair and rested his feet in the other. He would not let the man anywhere near him. They would not breathe the same air for the time being.

“The hostility is unnecessary mylimasis,” the psychiatrist began, “I told you exactly what would happen. I told you that by turning the wolves towards me you’d be securing our freedom. By playing along you allowed another to take my place in the cell.”

“That is *not* what you said. You’d said they’d tear each other apart. That’s what you said.” Will retaliated as he turned his head over to the ladder in the corner. He considered standing again and climbing it to put some distance between him and Hannibal, but he decided against it. He didn’t want to trade his appearance of strength and confidence for his antisocial urges.

“And who arrested Frederick Chilton? And who was present when he was shot afterwards? The wolves did indeed turn against each other Will.”

Will sighed, “It would’ve been nice to keep me a bit more in the loop. Seeing that made me want to kill you.”

“And how would you have done so?, if you did make another attempt on my life.”

“The only way deserving of you,” Will replied coldly, “With my hands.”

A chill went down his spine at the thought of his own death. A death by the hand of the one person he loved. A death that was deserving of him. A death most fitting for their twisted and bloody romance.

“I would be lying if I said I wasn’t honored by such a thought.” Hannibal chimed in.

“It’s not a compliment. I’d want to make sure you were dead myself. I wouldn’t want to risk missing you.” Will continued, “but that’s not the matter at hand. The matter is why you did that. Why would you risk us, Abigail, for the chance that he would take the fall? Why not just be more careful?”

“We already discussed this. In a great amount of depth to be exact. Do you not remember telling me that we would not run? Perhaps you’d like me to refresh your memory?”

“No!” Will shouted, “Do *not* refresh my memory. Stay the fuck out of my head.”

There was a brief silence between the two men for another quick moment.

“I–” Will began again, “I just don’t understand why you needed my help. You could’ve easily done this all on your own. Why me?”

There was a simple snare hidden within his words. One wrong move would catch Hannibal’s foot within it. Like a landmine, he would have to outwit the mechanics designed to keep him bound by his own words.

Will knew the trap was obvious, but he didn’t care. It wasn’t entirely meant to catch him in the lie. It was easily meant more to acknowledge that the veil forced over Will’s eyes by the warmth of the man’s love had been ripped from him. Will was acknowledging for Hannibal that he was no longer blind. The disciple had been cured of his ailment at long last.

The simple question that urged Hannibal to damn himself had revealed that or them.

“I simply wanted to see what would happen.”

“I don’t want to be lied to, darling. There is a list of lies that you’ve told me for a variety of reasons, don’t include this. ”

“You’re correct I’m lying mylimasis, please forgive me.”

“Only if you tell me the truth. Tell me why you wanted me working with you. Don’t lie. I have the right to know the *real* reason.”

Hannibal sighed and turned away from Will. He made his way over to his desk and opened the same drawer that began their dance of love and war. He pulled out the same knife that he had before, and carried it over to Will. He laid the blade with the tip pointing himself down onto the nearby coffee table. The leather hilt of the knife was easily within Will’s grasp. In an instant he could easily take it and send it through the man’s heart. The death would be by his hands, just like he had promised him. The torture would end. The manipulation would end. He could end his marriage without the paperwork or the fear. He and Abigail would finally be free.

Following the man’s death they could find refuge with Jack. The head of the Behavioral Science Unit would most likely have remained suspicious despite the spectacle provided by Hannibal and Miriam Lass. And he most likely would give Will and Abigail a new name and a new home. They could easily have a life outside of the horrid man that brought them together through a lie and a phone call.

But Will knew that it wouldn’t happen. He could hope all he wanted, but he knew Jack would never help them after the blood spattered onto his glasses yet again. If Jack caught wind of the death he’d be back in the Baltimore Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Besides, Will was too proud of a man to ask for help on most occasions. And when he did plead with people, it was to manipulate them the way Hannibal had manipulated him. And Abigail would never go with him if he managed to seek help from the FBI. They’re her enemies, though she never truly admitted that. They caused the deaths of her parents. They were the reason that she was in Hannibal Lecter’s attic to begin with. And if they knew she was alive they would put her on trial as an accessory to murder. She would have a cell beside Will for crimes that she had been forced to commit.

There was no denying that he was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

There was no denying that a right choice simply did not exist. Safety was another illusion cast before him. Will was trapped in a maze in which there was no exit. He was damned if he killed and damned if he didn't.

But was he willing to accept that damnation by putting his love for Hannibal aside and putting the knife through the heart that beat only for him?

Their extensive time together showed him that he could never. They could never seem to end their sufferings by ending the other's life. And they both were too stubborn and set in their ways to die. The knife just inches away from Will had, in its own indirect way, proved that to them.

There would be no escape for Will Graham.

"When you first saw this knife, you ran. Do you remember?" Hannibal began.

Will nodded. He was too keen on listening to Hannibal's words to conjure up a proper verbal response.

"You saw the sharpened blade, and you ran. You left me no choice but to follow with it in hand. Despite our connection, you made me choose between you and myself. I chose incorrectly and cast you farther away from me. You ran from me out of fear of what you thought me to be. You saw the version that Jack Crawford wanted you to see, and you ran to that secluded cabin. You made me consider the spices in which I would season your liver with."

"I didn't make you do that. Nobody asked you to do that. You did that all on your own. It's not my fault by any means. I didn't *want* to be eaten." Will interrupted as he crossed his arms.

"Touché," Hannibal commented before he sat on the arm of the chair that Will had blocked with his legs. Will rolled his eyes in annoyance and tried to kick him off, but Hannibal did not budge. He wanted to be close to the brunette when he spoke his truth, "In hindsight, it was not my proudest of moments. I allowed a long forgotten feeling to control me. I had

chosen a meal over love out of fear. Fear of another loss had driven me, and it's one of the greatest regrets of my life. I simply did not want to feel that fear again. I didn't want to risk another instance in which you ran from me and my hand was forced towards making the choice yet again. I didn't want you to run again. I wanted you to stay by my side, and I by yours. Making you part of my endeavors forced your own hand enough so you'd stay as an accomplice. Everything I've done, I've done to keep you by my side. Passion and love drove me."

"Fear of abandonment drove you." Will returned as he removed his feet from the chair and set them on the ground. Hannibal slid into the cushion of the chair, but was redirected onto Will's lap at the sound of his hand patting against his thigh.

Hannibal curled himself around Will's body in a silent pleading embrace, and it was met with Will's arms wrapping and enveloping around him.

"Was Abigail another tactic used to keep us chained together?" Will asked softly as a tear began to swell in his eyes.

"She was never a tactic. She's a daughter." Hannibal breathed as he buried his ashamed face in Will's neck.

"And is your expression of love a tactic, or is that real too?" Will questioned as he ran a hand through Hannibal's hair.

"It's both."

"Explain. Now."

"The words are nothing but truthful, but it doesn't help to use the phrase against Jack Crawford. It was a taunt when I said it over the phone, but it wasn't a lie."

Will continued to hold Hannibal in his arms as the blonde planted repetitively on the same part of the neck that he buried his face in. The blonde psychiatrist whispered sweet nothings to Will in a language that Will was yet to master, but Will understood their combined meaning. Will didn't need to be fluent in any language to know that the sweet nothings were words of love and adoration. The conditional warmth was wrapped around Will Graham like a blanket laced with hidden needles. He could easily be pricked. He could easily begin to bleed, but the soft wool and cotton of Hannibal's suit jacket against him was comforting. Despite the needles pressing against him and threatening pain, the blanket still felt. Though the safety was false, Will found himself giving into the warmth almost too easily.

There would be no escape for Will Graham. There would be no way to separate from Hannibal Lecter, but maybe Will wouldn't have to. Their worlds were dark. They were full of torment and terrors beyond most human comprehension. Their views of life had been tainted by their pasts. They both experienced horrors that no human should ever experience. They were both equally demented in the eyes of society. They were outcasts that found peace within each other.

"Stay with me." Hannibal begged.

"Where else would I go?" Will answered soothingly as the hand not in Hannibal's hair began to rub against his back as comfortingly as Will could muster considering that he was never a reassuring presence.

In Hannibal Lecter Will had found a home. The home wasn't perfect by any means. The floor often creaked and the walls had small cracks embedded within it. The lighting was very low and often kept dark corners of rooms, but it was a warm light that it emitted. The cracks in the walls had painted offerings devoted to him planted strategically next to it. The dining room always had fresh flowers in an elegant glass vase, and there was always a home-cooked meal in the oven. He'd never feel alone again. He'd never go hungry again. He'd know joy as a constant instead of a variable. The home wasn't perfect, and it often threatened collapse at the hand of the storms of their lives, but the home was full of love.

And in Will Graham Hannibal found belonging. He'd been alone almost his whole life, Anyone who ever got close to him often found their way to an early grave. He had lost everything he had ever known. He'd lost family time and time again. He always had a home in Lithuania where he had spent his childhood, but he no longer belonged there. He could never return there. He didn't belong in Italy when he visited it as a boy attending university. He didn't belong in France when he worked under scholars. He certainly didn't belong in America where there was no shortage of rude and unforgiving people. He had no belonging

anywhere in the vast earth until he met Will Graham. The man had given him a new life. He'd given him happiness that he never thought to be possible for a man like him. His routine had been interrupted for excitement and flavor within his life. He couldn't picture a life in which there was no Will Graham beside him. In fact, a life without Will Graham wasn't a life worth living. He'd go anywhere and do anything to stay by his side. He'd kill to feel his fingers laced within his own. He'd uproot the existence he had built for himself to follow Will into whatever corner of the earth he decided they'd escape to. He'd gladly lay down his life for Will Graham if circumstances ever required it. The only place he had ever belonged was beside his mylimasis. No other place was fitting for him.

"Hannibal," Will cooed after their long silence, "I think you still owe me a proper reception. We're married and we never had a real ceremony."

"I believe you're correct," Hannibal added, his tone equally tender as he pulled himself from the crook of Will's neck to face them.

"We should have one. It can double as a celebration of our freedom being kept. We could invite Jack and all of them too. Add insult to injury with it."

Hannibal smiled and chuckled at the idea, "I'd need to gather meat for the occasion, but we could make that possible. Perhaps instead we could make it a renewal of vows."

"We had vows?"

"I did. I wrote them the night after our first session, but I've adjusted them over time."

Will let out laughter and set a light kiss on his lips, "You've been in love with me for that long? *How?* I was so rude and vile. I climbed a ladder and stayed on a ledge to get away from you. All I did was snap at you."

"I sensed something within you. I'm unsure if it was our shared darkness or the longing in your vicious commentary, but whatever it may have been it caused a rather confusing attraction to you. I didn't consider it love then. A friend had called it "obsession."

“Either way, I’m flattered.” Will replied before he delivered another soft kiss, “I should get on mine then.”

“Indeed you should, but perhaps wait a night. We should make our way to my home. I owe you dinner and I owe Abigail some form of social interaction.”

“Good point. The poor girl has been cooped up in an attic for months. We shouldn’t keep her waiting.”

The two climbed out of the chair and off of each other slowly; not wanting to let go of each other for even a brief moment. To not have their hands on the other felt like a piece of their soul had been ripped from them, leaving behind a gaping hole of crimson blood in its place.

The psychiatrist watched as the profiler grabbed his overcoat, which he then realized was a gift that he had bought the profiler, before he ran his hand across his hair to smoothen it out the best that he could. The profiler gave the psychiatrist a brief kiss on the cheek and stated that he would see them at home before he left the psychiatrist alone in his office.

At long last they were finally able to be husbands. They had the title. They had similar minds. Their priorities were almost identical. Their lives had finally been allowed to weave together in a way that did not force violence or blood onto either of their hands. They were finally allowed to share a life as domestic as their homicidal minds allowed for them. There was peace between them at last, and there was no threat looming over them. There was no possibility of their already unstable life being uprooted by an FBI case of a scheme to frame one of the two men. They were finally able to share a calm coexistence. They finally could be a family again.

But to both men there was a fear still seeping into the backs of their minds. It seemed both insignificant and crucial to their marriage. Even with their words of devotion and clarification being spoken, the anxiety couldn’t be silenced. The feeling refused to leave. It was a parasite that threatened them both.

There was an overwhelming feeling that this peace would not last, and was about to go up in flames and blood alike.

A Meal Between Lovers

Chapter Notes

By the time you're reading this, I probably made my way to Comicon and actually met the guys I wrote like 86,000 words of fanfiction about. To celebrate the investment that broke my bank account, here's my favorite and longest chapter yet.

And ofc, here's the trigger warnings:

-Mason Verger.
-a very brief mention of child molesation
-mentions and descriptions of abuse
-mentions of death
-drugging
-mutilation
-murder
-cannibalism ofc

With all that in mind, enjoy🍽

Over the course of a few weeks Hannibal and Will managed to organize a dinner party to celebrate the victories of their lives. It was meant to be small since Will was not a social pariah. It was a gathering of friends, family, and a few coworkers to gloat over. It was meant to be small and private. Only their guests and their romantic partners if they had any. That was all they had asked for.

But a night meant for a simple dinner party had turned into an extravagant festival inside the psychiatrist's Baltimore home. And while they chose to invite only a dozen people to celebrate the renewal of their vows, over fifty were scattered throughout the large living space. There was a musician playing gentle hypnotic melodies just loud enough to be heard under the constant conversation surrounding it. They all dressed in a variety of colors, but none of the guests wore red per the request on the invitations. And each guest has a mask covering parts of their face in shades matching their suits or their gowns. Some guests took glasses of champagne from various staff that had been paid to carry the glasses on the large silver platters around the room. Others took small appetizers from similar platters. From the perspective of Alana Bloom, who was in a black dress that fell just at her ankles, it seemed that everyone was enjoying themselves and the rich atmosphere.

She seemed to enjoy it more when Margot returned to her side after grabbing two glasses of champagne for the two women.

Alana accepted the glass as gracefully as she could while she struggled to keep her eyes on Margot's masked face. The gold accents on her black fox mask, or the gold eye makeup she wore underneath, couldn't hide the purple and black discoloration also on display beside the gold. Even the gold of her dress could not hide the various bruise markings, but then again Margot Verger was never someone who ever hid anything like that. It was proof that she was stronger than what, or rather *who* , put those markings onto her. She was rather open with what her brother had done to her.

Alana put all her effort into avoiding the marks, but Margot caught her practically staring at one on her right arm.

"No, the horse didn't do it. Yes, the *pig* did. No, it wasn't justified." Margot interrupted to answer each of the questions Alana most likely had running through her head. Margot had gotten too used to the questions, especially since Mason's incident with the children on his property.

"My question was 'why?' Actually." Alana commented.

"Two nights ago I was invited to an evening with one of Hannibal's patients, Will. I think you know him. We had wine and talked about my psychiatrist. My brother thought I was plotting against him. He thought I was trying to make a heir to take over for when I kill him. Had me tested, and to my awful luck I had a false positive. He thinks that I slept with a married man even though I've explained that I don't exactly look in that direction. One thing led to the next, and my brother dearest got the final hand in that matter."

"Is that why he's here with you? To make sure you don't plot against him again?"

"That's exactly it. And of course, keeping up appearances according to him," Margot confirmed, "but between us, I think he's taken a liking to Doctor Lecter. An obsessive liking. He gave the man one of his own pigs."

“Projective much?” Alana joker in an attempt to make light of such a grim topic.

To her surprise, Margot laughed and took her hand in her own, “Couldn’t have said it better myself.”

Almost as if he had been listening in, Mason Verger approached the two women with an appetizer on a small plate. He wrapped his free hand around Margot and placed a kiss on her cheek. Margot flinched and tried to back away, but Mason’s grip on her tightened. And by default, Margot’s grip on Alana’s hand tightened with it.

“You must be the doctor I kept hearing so much about. Alaina Bloom was it?” He said slyly, the green venom present in his words.

“It’s Alana, sir. And you must be Mason.”

“The one and only.” Mason chuckled, “You used to be Margot’s psychiatrist right? Before she got transferred to Lecter? What happened?”

“Emotional complications.” Alana blurted.

Mason’s eyes wandered down to the two women’s hands, which were carefully and lovingly intertwined.

“Ohhhh, I see.” He replied with a hint of condescension in his tone, “You two are an item?”

“No!” the two women both bursted out in sync.

“Awh, what a shame.” He commented as he warped his lips into a pout, “Either way, if you hurt her, I’ll feed you to my pigs.”

“We know you would.” Margot muttered.

“Excuse me?” Mason snapped.

“We know you aren’t that cruel.” Margot quickly rephrased.

“Mhm, now if you’ll excuse me Doctor, I’d like to speak with my sister privately. I hope you understand.” Mason redirected before he dragged Margot into the secluded hallway nearby.

Alana couldn’t hear the man, but based on what her eyes displayed it was a heated conversation. Margot flinched often and showed signs of evident fear while Mason was smiling at the sight of her fear. Alana downed her champagne as she thought about how badly men like Mason Verger needed to be put down. He had never hated anyone before, but he was the first.

She hoped his death came sooner rather than later.

Meanwhile, it was being plotted in the kitchen by the two husbands and their daughter. They didn’t wear masks; there was no need for them yet. The kitchen was a secret escape from the crowd and the noise in the ears of both Will and Abigail alike.

The brunette father and the freshly blonde daughter stood off to the corner as the man in the three piece suit elegantly flew back and forth across the kitchen. Will’s eyes remained locked on the flashes of the deep crimson fabric as they swished back and forth between a counter and the oven. Abigail, on the other hand,held the ends of her freshly dyed hair in her hand and gently ran her fingers through it. Her eyes were held downwards to watch the locks move under her own motions.

“He came in uninvited. If that wasn’t rude I don’t know what is Hannibal.” Will commented at last as he adjusted the way his matching crimson dress shirt was tucked into his black dress pants.

“We cannot slaughter him now. We need an opportunity, an alibi. Besides, he provided a decoy dish named Pavlov. He’s unfortunately welcome under my roof. ” Hannibal explained as a batch of ‘pork livers’ were pulled from the oven and replaced with a raw batch that looked all too similar to the cooked batch.

“I can be an alibi. We can break the rules for someone like him.” Abigail added, still watching her own dyed hair.

“No, you can’t.” Will corrected as he pulled himself from the corner and began to help set the small pieces of actual pork into a bowl of various flavorings and seasonings before he shook it gently.

“Will’s correct. The whole point of the masks was to allow you a social setting without discovery. It’s why you’re given new hair and a new name. Tell me Abigail, do you remember your new persona? You’ve done the research without my permission, I’d hope that you’d remembers”

“I’m Mischa Lecter. Daughter from a past marriage. Named me after your sister because my hair reminded you of her. My mother died, and you took me in. I have agoraphobia, which is why I stay in the house.” Abigail recited.

“Good. You’d do well to keep it in mind the entirety of the night. One mistake could cost us a great deal.”

Abigail nodded shyly, and adjusted the red scarf around her neck.

Will hated the scarf on her. He knew it was made to match their suits, but it felt like it had been made to jab at their shared history. Red, which in Will’s eyes looked all too similar to her blood spilt onto the floor of her Minnesota home, served as yet another reminder of what he had done to her. In an attempt to protect her he had traded one cannibal father for another. The only real difference was their way of dressing, but Will had seemed to cover that side of Garrett Jacob Hobbs with his own usual flannels. Abigail had never truly been free of Garett Jacob Hobbs, Will had simply recreated him and divided him among her two new fathers. The red scarf that looked almost identical to her near-death experience reminded him of how he both saved her and then damned her afterwards. And of course Hannibal approved of the

scarf because it served as a reminder that *he* was the one to truly save her life. The scarf of flowing blood seemed to flow with even more brutal symbolism to Will Graham.

“Perhaps, we could lure him away from the crowd instead. The alibi could be a panic attack caused by Mischa’s agoraphobia. New people became overwhelming.” Hannibal suggested as his view panned over to Abigail as she patted down her black turtleneck and the red belt that held her high-waisted vintage dress pants.

“And who would be the lure?” Will asked as his view began to align with Hannibal’s.

Abigail didn’t speak for a moment. Though her face held its usual shy and afraid demeanor, her mind was screaming to take one of the hot trays and beat both of her fathers over the head with it. She had begged not to be lure, and for once in her life she would not change from her stance. She left her life of luring in Minnesota. She buried it with her first father.

“Hannibal will be.” she chimed in at last, “You said he was interested in you. He’d be more likely to go with you than he would me.”

“She has a point.” Will remarked as he pulled another batch of ‘pork liver’ from the oven and replaced it with the real pork.

“It’s settled. After our meal we shall lure the pig to the slaughter.”

Hannibal naturally began to make the dish more aesthetically pleasing for the guests by adding strategically placed drizzles of homemade sauce and parsley. While they worked, Abigail grabbed a member of the hired staff to put the silver domed cloches over the plates and place them at the table. And when all the dishes were set, they were also instructed to gather all the guests and ensure they’re all seated in the places assigned to them by the name cards.

Hannibal pulled out the real pork from the oven and arranged it the same way that he had the other dishes, but put it into a tupperware container just in case. He shut the oven off and put the black wolf masquerade mask over his face. Will put the white lamb mask onto Abigail

while Hannibal placed the red stag mask on himself. With their masks intact they joined the social environment that they carefully forged.

The conversation came easily for Hannibal. He had been hosting dinner parties for years, which led him to become comfortable within the environment. Will and Abigail, however, were not as comfortable. They struggled to hold conversation and didn't dare to leave Hannibal's side.

The variety of emotions and noise was overwhelming for Will while the crowd itself was something that Abigail had rarely experienced. There were so many people, and not a single one looked similar to her. No teenage girls were present, except her and one other.

She found a girl in the distance wearing the same mask as her. The girl's hair was a dark brown, but the way the light hit the locks made it seem almost red. As Abigail detached from her fathers and began to approach her, she swore she found a streak of blonde matching her own in the girl's hair. And almost if she sensed Abigail's eyes, she tucked away that blonde streak.

"I like your mask." Abigail began meekly as she pointed to the mask on the girl's face.

"Thanks. I like yours." The girl quickly replied, her West Virginian accent thick and impossible to ignore.

"And…. The accent too. It sounds like West Virginia, I think. I heard it a lot when I visited with my fa-…mother. What are you doing all the way in Baltimore?"

"I'm Agent Crawford's plus one."

"I didn't realize. I- I didn't see a ring."

"Oh no, we're not involved. I'm only 23. It's FBI business actually. He asked me to take a day off from classes and accompany him. He told me to be a second pair of eyes. Spot

anything abnormal and report back, that kind of thing. Said something about the Chesapeake Ripper being here, which didn't make sense. That case is closed. Has been for weeks. I read the TattleCrime about it. I didn't clarify with him though. I'm hoping he'll get me into the FBI academy, and questioning him won't help me make my case."

"Yeah, I- I get that. And what did you say your name was?"

"Clarice. And you?"

"It's A- uh.. Mischa."

"Nice to meet you Mischa." Clarice said as she held out a hand for her to shake.

"Nice to see you too Clarice." She smiled as she took Clarice's hand and softly shook it as she looked back to her fathers across the room, "maybe I can ask for us to sit together at dinner. We could talk more."

"I'd like that."

Instead of seeing Hannibal or Will watching her protectively, he found the wide eyes of Jack Crawford staring at her. He blinked frantically for a moment before rubbing her eyes aggressively and staring at her again. She knew exactly what was running through his mind.

He was handed the Tupperware of pork by a member of the hired staff, which he took slowly as if it would explode at his touch. With it in his hand he treaded towards Abigail and Clarice as they talked. Abigail could sense the familiar presence growing closer, but tried to remain as natural either way. To show a single sign of uneasiness at the presence of Jack Crawford would give her away immediately.

"Starling. We're leaving." He boomed as he adjusted his eagle mask with his free hand.

“We got what we came for?” Clarice asked.

“Yeah. Let’s go.” He demanded as he kept his eyes on Abigail, “sorry to pull her away from you….”

“Mischa.”

“Mischa. Enjoy the party.” Jack spat before he grabbed Clarice’s hand and began to guide her away from Abigail.

Clarice as she was dragged past Abigail, managed to slip a small white paper into the deep pocket of Abigail’s vintage black dress pants. Abigail watched the hand as it slid out of her pocket as quickly as it slipped in before she looked up at the girl. Clarice made a phone symbol with her hand and held it to her ear with a smile before she turned to face Jack and the exit.

Abigail felt the paper in her pocket and smiled back, but the joy in her face was swiftly replaced with tears. For a brief moment, she had a companion. Briefly she had a trusted confidant. She had a friend for a moment, but it ended when Crawford practically ripped her away.

She would never be able to speak to the peculiar girl again.

She lifted the mask and wiped her tear just as Clarice shut the door behind them; the barrier of their lives presented between them again. But as the door shut there was a ringing of the dinner bell.

Abigail followed the mass of people into the dining room, and watched as they filed into seats around the long table. She found Will at one head of the table with an empty space to his right. She read the card at the space and saw ‘M. Lecter’ in bold cursive writing. She took a seat in front of it. To her right was an open space with a card that read ‘C. Starling’ on it. She snatched it from the table and crumpled into a ball before stuffing it into the same pocket

with the piece of paper. Will, who had been examining Jack's card to his left, couldn't help but take notice to it.

"You ok?" Will whispered to her.

"Yeah, just tired of playing dead." Abigail sniffled.

"Do you want to step aside and talk about it?" Will offered.

"No, I- I'm good. I'll talk to Hannibal about it."

"And why did you crumple up that name card?"

"I made a friend, but I can't have friends if I'm dead."

"Maybe we can find a way for you to have friends."

Abigail opened her mouth to speak, but the scaling of Hannibal's chair across the wood floor at the other head of the table. He stood and gently tapped his glass of red wine to gain everyone's attention. Will, Abigail, and the rest of their company and faced him, waiting eagerly for his words and their meal alike.

"As you all know, tonight has a purpose beyond the enjoyment of a well cooked meal." Hannibal began, "We're here to celebrate a great triumph. Anyone who knew my husband or myself are more than aware of the challenges we encountered together. Our union was a simple precaution, an alliance if you will. Though we had a connection, it was not that connection that put the rings onto our fingers. Fear had been our motivator. Fear drove us to the altar, but love kept us united. Our lines of work stole Will's mind, a mind I have come to adore, from us. The Chesapeake Ripper, the same man we had been working to find for almost a year, used that against us and framed Will for his crimes. The Chesapeake Ripper manipulated him into believing that it was I who had unleashed those horrors about him. The Chesapeake Ripper put us at war with each other, but the hatred only led our love to grow

deeper. But despite the clear efforts to separate us, we managed to find the Ripper and bring him in. He's no longer a danger to us."

Will was working hard not to laugh at the way Hannibal implied he wasn't the Chesapeake Ripper. It was hilarious and it took several elbows from Abigail to keep his laughter from escaping his lips.

"But when he was he taught us a great deal. He taught us to trust one another even when distrust was all too easy. Or even when we could not trust ourselves. We learned to be faithful even in times of need. Though we hated one another and often forgot our trust, we managed to stay loyal to our hatred and therefore each other. We never strayed from each other. Patience was a constant lesson. I couldn't find the time to count the amount of times we wanted the other dead. It came all too often. But once the rage subsided we found method within the other's madness, and we became closer through it. And in the midst of all that, we learned to love wholeheartedly and without restraint. We, combined, are a great deal of things. And while both yin and yang can exist separately, they're better off together where they can balance the other's mayhem."

Hannibal set the fork onto the table but kept his glass in hand as he walked around the table to Will.

"Will, Mano sirdiš, Mano mylimasis," he continued as he gently set Will's hand above his own and kissed the back of it, "Darkness and loneliness was a constant in my life that I had come to accept. I craved isolation the way we crave the very air we breathe. I was a lost wanderer, searching for a brighter eternity for myself. I had almost entirely given up, until I met you. We've been each other's constant in chaos. We've been a rock to lean against for support. We've been the wind guiding each other in the direction best suited for us. We've been the foundations in which our home is built. The darkness remains, but there's comfort in sharing it with you. I could live from this moment until the day the earth collapsed in on itself, yet I still could never make myself worthy of you or the love you've shown me. However, I am grateful all the same for the ability to repay you for your kindness and devotion from this day until my last day. As tavé melié, mylimasis."

Will stood and gazed into the man's eyes for a moment, getting lost in the red specks that he always adored. He might've stared at them for hours had it not been for the vast eyes fixated on them. Instead, he settled for a quick kiss filled with passion and admiration.

For a moment, the world melted away until only they remained. The guests no longer watched. The sweet smell of organs were no longer enticing them. The light faded and only their touch remained. Will wanted to remain in this moment forever among the pure and intense love he could feel radiating off Hannibal.

Unfortunately, he had no other option but to pull away.

“I love you too.” He cooed as he raised his own glass of red wine with a wide grime of pure bliss, “To the Chesapeake Ripper, the founder of our gruesome romance.”

The people were uneasy at first, but when Abigail threw her glass of wine into the air the others followed. There was a clinking of glasses around the table.

“And to us.” Hannibal added in a hushed tone, “we survived our greatest endeavor yet. Enjoy the meal mylimasis, and the second course to follow.”

Will clinked their glasses together and they both drank alongside their guests. And as their glasses were being set down, the staff ripped away the cloches to reveal Hannibal’s dishes. They all applauded and began to dig in, which forced Hannibal back at his side of the table where he put his own food. He made a mental note to himself.

‘Host etiquette is not worth the distance. Seat yourself next to Will and offer the head to another.’

He ate the thought away. He doubted there would be a next time.

The dinner itself was magnificent. The sauce carefully drizzled around the meat added a rich and sophisticated cream feeling to the dish, while parts of the ‘pork liver’ that didn’t have the sauce upon it had a burst of southern tang to it. The spices, like the cajun and the cayenne pepper, were balanced by the sweet oil that Hannibal had marinated the meat in before it was placed strategically in the oven.

Will had never dined on a human liver before. When Hannibal cooked for himself and Abigail, he often brought a fish or a chicken solely so he wouldn't have to eat somebody. But he was aware of the behavior all the same. At times, he often participated without knowing. There had been the chicken soup that Hannibal made when he was in the hospital, the breakfast he made for him after the death of Garrett Hobbs, and probably others that he couldn't remember off the top of his head. And there had been times where he tried to actively avoid human consumption, but sometimes there was no avoiding the pieces of Grutus that found its way onto the spoon. Never had he knowingly eaten a person.

He looked to Abigail, who was chewing a piece of the liver like she'd been accustomed to it long ago; like she accepted it long before tonight. It served as another reminder that Will had traded her lifestyle for more of the same.

He looked at the dish again. If he didn't know what it was he might've found it all too appealing, but unfortunately he knew. He didn't want to eat it, but he knew people were watching. Hannibal was watching. There was no other option.

He took a bite of the liver. As the flavor seeped into his tongue he immediately thought of home. There was no way to describe the flavoring without mentioning the southern brilliance of Louisiana. The taste was bright and joyful, like a party. No, like the Mardi Gras of New Orleans. Hannibal had done the research for him.

There had been an abundance of guests and and copious amount of food, but it had all been made in Will Graham's honor.

—----------

Will and Abigail helped the staff clear the plates solely so they didn't have to interact with anyone else. They both needed a breath of fresh air to help keep calm for what was to come.If the nerves of the party bled onto Mason, they'd be caught in an instant.

Hannibal told them that he would lure Mason through the kitchen and into a guest room. He also told Will to not bring attention to himself or Abigail as they passed. When they went into the guest room eventually, they were to do so a few moments after Mason had shut the door.

And as if on cue, Hannibal walked through the kitchen with Mason Verger laughing behind him.

Will waited for the sound of the door shutting before he moved away from the sink and grabbed the kettle of tea and a cup. He poured the tea into the cup while Abigail dropped a variety of tablets into it. She then grabbed a second cup and carried it into the guest room.

Mason, who had stabbed his switchblade into one of the cushioned chairs, was focused only on his own words when the father and daughter entered the room. He was manically happier than Will remembered, and less observant. Hannibal must've already given him something. Will set the cup down by Mason and set the kettle down by Hannibal. Abigail handed him the empty teacup just in case he wanted to drink.

Mason didn't thank Will or even acknowledge him when he took the cup and began to drink. There was no sense of politeness evident in his bones, and when Will glanced at Hannibal, it was clear in his eyes that the psychiatrist was beyond annoyed with Mason.

His death couldn't seem to come quick enough.

"I never took you for a family man, Doctor Lecter." Mason said as his words began to slur and his head was thrown back against the chair.

"In all honesty, that's good to hear," Lecter replied as he took off his mask. Abigail and Will followed his lead and did the same, "I work hard to keep my profession and my home life separate from each other."

Mason smiled and let out a drunken sounding laugh, which faded into a moan, "Why'd you call me to the bedroom? Perhaps it was to thank me or the pig you used for dinner?"

Hannibal couldn't conceal his grimace of disgust as Mason's crossed legs were undone and left spread across the chair. He looked to Will and Will almost looked at the look that seemed almost like terror. The Chesapeake Ripper was an unstoppable force, but it was a force that seemed to slow down at the sight of sexual innuendo. Will couldn't help but feel honored that his advancements weren't met with the same look of horror.

“Abigail.”

“Excuse me?” Mason asked before the blonde girl took the switchblade from the chair and pressed it against his throat.

“You’ve been very rude Mister Verger,” Hannibal began, “And in case it wasn’t clear then I hope it is now; I don’t tolerate rudeness.”

Mason laughed under the weight of the blade, “You’re so funny Doctor Lecter.”

Will sat on the arm of the chair and whispered behind a cupped hand, “We won’t honor him, will we?”

“I don’t honor animals. Pigs are never honored at the slaughter, men are.” Hannibal confirmed over the clicking of heels headed down the hallway towards him.

“Good. I didn’t want him honored.” Will added as he sat up and approached Abigail.

“Perhaps you could be the one to slaughter the measly pig.” Hannibal suggested as the door behind them creeped open silently.

Will nodded and went to take the knife from Abigail, but before his hand could touch the handle of the switchblade there was the clicking sound of a camera.

All three murderers snapped their heads over to the source of the sound and found the tightly curled red hair of Freddie Lounds with the camera covering her mouse mask. She lowered it and looked them for a brief moment to acknowledge them before she sprinted back down the hallway.

“Don’t kill him.” he grunted at Hannibal.

“Then sliced the ginger.” Hannibal coldly replied just as Will sprinted out of the room after Freddie.

Abigail looked at Hannibal for a brief moment, her eyes wide with confusion and shock alike. They’d been careful yet they couldn’t seem to avoid being caught. She was a fool to believe in the two men.

“Abigail, hand Mason the knife.” Hannibal commanded as he crossed one leg over the other.

“I don’t want it.” Mason whined as the blade found its way into his hand.

“Mason, I’m feeling a bit peckish, and you’ve been quite rude to myself, my family, and your family alike. Perhaps we can make up for it by providing me a morsel or two.”

“But I can’t cook.” Mason continued to whine. Abigail rolled her eyes at him.

“Your nose will suffice then.” Hannibal suggested, “Allow me to eat your nose. Give me your nose.”

—----------

Freddie Lounds wasn’t a difficult person to catch. Will had spent too much of his time running from a variety of things and people, which naturally made him light on his feet. Freddie, however, was not as graceful with her movement. She had brought a bulky professional camera instead of a small pocket camera and the choice made each motion louder and slower. The constant adjustment of the cross body strap and her mask made her klutzy. Her heels were not made for running either, so each stride caused a slight limp like she was an injured deer. It was all too easy for Will Graham to catch her.

She was almost out of the kitchen she entered from when Will grabbed her arm and jerked her back. She took a breath to scream, but was met with his other hand held flat against her mouth.

He knew he should just snap her neck, he couldn't bring himself to do it. He told himself that the reason was the attention it would attract, but he knew in the back of his head that it was a lie.

It was so much easier to kill Randall Tier. At least he could rationalize his death. Freddie's on the other hand could only be painted as cold blooded murder.

"Give me the camera Freddie, and I'll let you go. He won't know."

"But–"

"Please Freddie. I don't want to kill you. No evidence, no dying. Got it?"

She nodded and used her one free hand to push the strap off her shoulder and slide it slowly down her body. She stepped her legs out of it once it reached the ground, and used her right leg to kick it back a few steps.

"Thank you Freddie," Will exhaled as he released the redhead and collected the camera.

"Anything to stay alive."

Will let out a breathy chuckle, "If you could, would you mind put in a good word for us if you do end up talking? I- I don't want her to suffer with him."

"I'll do it for her, not for you. She deserves better than this life."

“We finally agree on something.”

Freddie let out a weak smile before she left the kitchen and disappeared into the sea of people.

As Will watched her fade into the flesh painting he couldn’t seem to shake the feeling that the choice he just made would be fatal. And as he returned to Hannibal and threw the camera at his feet, there was a single thought on loop in his unstable mind.

Soon, most likely be tomorrow, they’d know. Every last one of them would know.

They Know

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies!! This chapter is….. deep. Good luck!

Trigger warning list:
-mentions of death
-mentions of murder
-threats of murder
-themes of isolation
-planning of violence
-ideations of death
-depression and suicidal ideations

If anyone is struggling with their mental health please know you are not alone! There are various resources available for you to pursue. You matter and you are loved. Don't ever be afraid to speak up!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun had long since set on their dinner party. The masses left, leaving behind only a few remnants of glasses and plates. Some plates had leftover pieces of the 'pork liver', which Hannibal ordered the staff to put into containers for Will. He knew neither of them would eat the food others had touched, but they both knew that his dogs wouldn't complain.

At first, the men watched with their masks still on as the staff began to clean the mess that the guests had left behind. Hannibal and Will both wanted to ensure that during the cleaning process nobody would go somewhere they shouldn't or open a door not intended for them. Hannibal had carefully researched each of his staff to make sure it didn't happen, but there was no harm in double checking.

Hannibal after a moment stopped taking interest in his staff, but Will continued to watch. Both removed their masks and set them down on a nearby table facing each other.

The black of the wolf mask clashed with the red of the stag. They faced each other, the holes of the masks staring at each other with feelings concealed and forcefully violent. The stag, seemingly innocent, had the same shade of red over its face. And the wolf, seemingly violent, had kept its dark fur clean of the stag. It was almost impossible to tell which was meant to be

the predator and which was the prey. Their wearers didn't help the inquiry either. Both were seemingly inherently capable of evil, only one had the evil known by those around them. The stag was bound to be seen the same way as the wolf with time. The clock was ticking.

On the other side of the room Abigail sat down at the piano. There was a piece of melancholy melody standing facing her over the other pieces. She had taught herself how to play it during the days where she was her only company. While Will and Hannibal kissed through iron bars, she sat alone playing the music before her until it was impossible to press the wrong key.

She looked to Will and Hannibal, who didn't need to be facing each other for the world to know they were soulmates, and looked away. They were killer husbands, so different yet so alike. They blended so well together, the way white and black blurred into gray. They completed each other the way that yin completed yang. The world around them was a mere distraction towards the love they shared for each other. Blood was the ribbon wrapping around their hands at the altar. Their rings were made from the ashes of those that dared to stand against their unbreakable bond. Those that tried to saw away at their love seemed to find themselves in the fabrics of the human suits they wore before each other as they exchanged vows. Jack Crawford was the priest that brought the union to the world, yet he worked so hard to annul it. It was only a matter of time before he joined the bones and bodies of the others that tried to keep them apart. Perhaps Katz, Chilton, Budge, Gideon, and the others would be more welcoming than the two husbands would be.

Yet she was alone. She was made to be their daughter. It was why she was kept alive all this time. It was also why she was killed too. She was a daughter in order to bring extra strength to their woven bond. Her existence was the steel lacing around the string. Though the bond of the two men was strong, she made it impenetrable. She was their glue.

She was their daughter. She had a family that loved her. She had a family that would kill for her upon request, yet she had a family in which she could never expand. She couldn't make friends as long as she was in this family. As long as she was their daughter she would never find the same love that her fathers shared. She'd never find that devotion.

A third wheel until they day she died.

She began to play the notes in front of her to keep her mind off that thought, yet the notes only screamed it louder. She couldn't leave. She couldn't love. She could only be as she was; eternally stuck with only herself.

She couldn’t even call the girl because of them.

This life had become too depressing. Being their daughter became so tiring. She would have preferred to have died beside her first father if it meant the suffering would have ended sooner.

The sad notes became more infuriating and passionately angry as she played,the beats booming through the room and gaining Hannibal’s attention. At the sound he held a hand out to Will.

“May I have this dance mylimasis?” Hannibal asked sweetly.

“It’d be rude to tell you no Doctor Lecter.” Will answered as he put his hand in Hannibal’s and allowed the man to pull them into a dance.

Abigail didn’t watch as they swayed. She focused on herself and the notes ahead. To think of them would slowly bring her back to the girl from the part; to the closeness she would never get.

The two men swayed, their bodies pressed together and their hands wrapped around each other. Both of Hannibal’s hands rested around Will’s waist while both of Will’s arms wrapped gently and lovingly wrapped around Hannibal’s neck. Their gaze did not waver from the other and did not express anything but love for the other.

“Will, I have a proposal for you.” Hannibal cooed as Will allowed his head to rest against Hannibal’s chest, “if you’ll allow it.”

“When have you ever asked and cared for the answer?” Will playfully questioned.

“Mylimasis, this is quite serious.”

“Go ahead Hannibal.”

“I’d like for you to live here with me, permanently. I cannot stand to only see you for one or two nights at a time. I’d like to see you forever. After all, your family is here.” Hannibal let out at last.

Will smiled and let out a breathy laugh, “I’m honored, but what about–”

“The dogs?” Hannibal interrupted, “Bring them with you. They can keep Abigail company. We both know how lonely isolation can be. Perhaps they could help her find meaning or belonging within their ranks.”

“Alright, I will,” Will agreed, “Under one condition.”

“Name it and it shall be yours.”

“We change our last names.” Will blurted out all too eagerly.

“I was beginning to wonder if you would ever ask. I already have the legal forms prepared for us.” Hannibal replied as he struggled to keep his happiness from seeping through his human suit.

“What would you prefer we do?”

“I can’t take yours, if that’s what you’re asking, Will explained, “He wouldn’t be happy to hear I’ve taken the name of his enemy.”

“Arguably a betrayal to rival that of Julius Caesar's and Brutus’,” Hannibal added, “And I cannot take yours. Jack Crawford would not be pleased to hear that the infection of my

influence had spread to your own name."

"We could keep both of ours then. Graham-Lecter doesn't sound too bad."

"I'd prefer Lecter-Graham." Hannibal disagreed.

"Fine, Lecter-Graham it is."

The agreement between the two men was sealed with a kiss.

At the sound of their lips locking Abigail slammed a closed fist into the keys and threw herself off the cushion seat. She threw her lamb mask off her face and onto the ground beside her, cracking it under the force at which it hit the wood. She stormed off into Will's room and slammed the door behind her.

The two husbands watched the door before looking to each other for guidance.

"Very unlike her." Hannibal commented as their swaying halted.

"She's going through a lot right now." Will explained with his arms still around Hannibal.

"How so?" Hannibal asked as an eyebrow raised.

"She… met someone tonight. A girl. Says she made a friend but then again you call me friend."

"That's wonderful news. Why is this such an upsetting thing to her?"

“She’s dead Hannibal. We killed Abigail. She couldn’t possibly pursue a friendship with another one of Jack’s without putting us all at risk.”

“She feels trapped and alienated by the life we created for her security. And there’s nothing either of us could do in order to calm her ailment.”

“She did say she wanted to talk to you about it. Go to her.” Will commanded as he released Hannibal from his hold.

Hannibal nodded and made his way over to Will’s room. He stood outside and listened as the girl paced around the room. He could hear each footstep she made. Each tapping of the Mary Jane’s that she disdained wearing echoed through the door. The swishing of her vintage dress pants against her hands as she struggled to wipe away the abundance of dog hair that found its way onto her clothes. She didn’t scream. He couldn’t hear tears. There was only the movements of the girl.

Hannibal knocked three times against the door and waited. Abigail didn’t respond. He knocked again and told her that he was at the door. The door opened without a word and Hannibal stepped inside.

He unbuttoned his suit jacket and took a seat at the foot of the bed his husband never used. Abigail shut the door and locked it before she sat beside him. Hannibal could feel each strand of Winston’s hair as it gathered on the backside of his dress pants. Hannibal never understood how the man managed to collect so much dog hair, and how he managed to get almost every piece of that collection into this room. He hated it, but he left it alone out of love and respect for what allowed Will comfort.

“Jack knows.” Abigail began at last.

“And what is it that Jack knows?” Hannibal asked, hinting towards the idea that he wanted confirmation of his thoughts.

“He saw me. Recognized me. Asked me my name.” She answered in the meak and soft manner that Hannibal worked so hard to break her out of.

“And what did you tell him?” Hannibal questioned.

“Told him and the girl he was with, Clarice, that my name was Mischa. They didn’t ask me anything else about me. They know.”

“Will and I shall handle it. You needn’t worry further with insignificant matters such as Jack Crawford.”

“I-..” Abigail stuttered as she struggled to find a way to put her next words, “I don’t think we can go to Will.”

“And why do you believe that Abigail?”

She took a brief moment to unravel her scarf and lay it on her lap, “He’s working with them.”

Hannibal frowned at the comment, “Of course he is. Through him we have managed to evade Jack Crawford’s persecution. He pointed the finger, per my request, and he gave me the ability to make Chilton the face behind the Ripper’s art. It took his alliance with them to create that.”

“No, not like that,” Abigail corrected, “He’s playing you. He didn’t kill Freddie. He let her go.”

“He did no such thing. He’s devoted to you, as any father would be. He would kill for you, as he already has before. His loyalty lies with you, and by association, myself as well.”

“He didn’t kill her. He only kills when lives are on the line. He killed my dad to save my life. He killed Randall to save his own life. There wasn’t a knife to either of our necks. He didn’t

kill her," Abigail continued to explain, "Didn't you find it odd that he didn't have a single drop of blood on his suit when he came back to us?"

"People often die of strangulation and not blood loss."

Abigail sighed, "He couldn't produce a body either, and he was all too eager to get rid of Mason Verger. He knows something, which might be the fact that Freddie isn't dead."

Hannibal sighed and stood. He walked over to the door and put an ear through it to make sure there were no listening parties on the other end. He took a deep breath with the intention of breathing in the atrocious aftershave, but found only clean air. They were alone.

"I expected as much, but I was hoping to remain blind a moment longer." Hannibal admitted at last, "I'd suggest you prepare a bag or two. Keep them as light as possible. When Jack Crawford comes knocking, I intend for us to be on an extensive tour of Europe. There is no purpose in staying."

"No." Abigail stated, her voice breaking by the words.

"Whatever do you mean? Why would you want to stay in Baltimore? There would be nothing left for either of us here."

"There isn't anything left for me anywhere." Abigail whispered as her eyes began to well with tears.

"Speak to me as if I am a psychiatrist and not a father. Tell me your ailment."

"I–... I met someone. She was perfect. She was kind but also firm. If you met her you would've loved her. The only problem is, I-.. I can't ever talk to her. I can't ever talk to anyone. I'm alone here."

“We could easily find company in Europe. Why would you prefer the isolation of Baltimore?”

“I don’t want to go to Europe. I don’t want to stay here. I want to move on. I want to go home.” Abigail finally admitted as the welling tears finally began to flow.

Hannibal kneeled in front of her and took her hand.

“You want to go home to your father.” Hannibal reiterated.

“I’m already dead, please, just let me die.” Abigail choked out as she flew into his arms.

“Who am I to deny you of your own family?”

—----------

Will had received a phone call shortly after Hanibal disappeared to the room Abigail was in. He picked up his phone to see Jack’s number on the screen. He pressed the power button in an attempt to ignore the call, but Jack called over and over again. Each time he was met with silence. Will was happy here, in the Baltimore home with his family. They had just thrown a party to celebrate their romance. The two lovers would finally be adding each other’s last names to their own.They would finally share a home. They would be as domestic as a family of killers could get.

He wasn’t in the mood to have his joy squashed by Jack Crawford now.

But Will’s phone buzzed yet again. This time it wasn’t a call, but a text. The words were short; simple even. They told him nothing yet Will knew exactly what they meant.

‘My office.Now. SOS’

Will had no choice but to get in the car and meet Jack. The state of his family could easily be at stake.

The drive was shorter compared to the haul he made from Wolf Trap. It only took him a few minutes and a great deal of speeding to reach the office.

When he arrived, he slammed the car door shut and practically sprinted into the building. He rushed past the agents on duty during the night shift, occasionally knocking into one or two of them on the way into the office. All the politeness he had towards anyone had long since passed.

He made his way into Jack's office and found two women sitting in the seats across from Jack. Both shifted to face him.

Will could recognize the red curly hair of the woman in the left seat almost anywhere. The very sight of it always found a way to send a wave of inhumane hate towards him. He often thought that the hate would eventually lead him to killing her, but recent events have proven that he couldn't deliver the blow necessary to do so.

The girl on the right, however, felt unfamiliar. Her hair was brown, but it reflected blood-red under the light. Her face was less mature, or rather less aged. She looked only a year or two older than his own daughter. Had he not known her name through Abigail, he might've guessed that she and Freddie were somehow related.

"Will, we need to talk." Jack demanded as he folded his hands on the desk.

"I think the thirteen calls and the text had already established that." Will retorted as he took a step closer to the people, his eyes glaring down Freddie and her devilish smirk.

"It's come to my attention that Hannibal is no longer living alone in the house." Jack began, "When were you going to tell me?"

“In all honesty, I didn’t think his familial ties were your concern.” Will snapped.

“Everything Hannibal Lecter does is my concern. If he breathes I want it reported back to me. *That* was established.”

“Well he has a daughter. Previous marriage. Her mother died, and he has always demonstrated a concern for family.”

“Special Agent Graham,” the girl in the right seat began as he stood, “I’m Agent Starling, pleasure to finally meet you.”

“You’re not an agent. Neither of us are FBI” Will snarled before recomposing himself, “but it’s a pleasure to meet you too. Mischa hasn’t stopped talking about you since you left before dinner.”

“Except she’s not Mischa, is she?” Starling interrupted, “Her hair has darker roots. Dyed blonde to match the same shade as one late Mischa Lecter. While she was complimenting my mask I couldn’t help but notice she’s missing an ear. Freak accident, or was it intentional? Do you know the answer to that by any chance Mr Graham?”

“Mischa chose to dye her hair because it was her mother’s. She and her mother never got along. She was often left scarred by her mother in more ways than one. It was an act of regaining the control her mother had over her. You were a teenager once, Clarice, have you not pierced your ears or snuck out to regain a sense of freedom or control?”

“I didn’t pierce my ears, no.”

“So you snuck out. The same feeling you got from that is what she was hoping to achieve in dyeing her hair. It was her way of breaking free. It wasn’t to keep hidden.”

“And her ear?” Freddie asked, her smirk even wider.

“I said that her mother had scarred her.”

Freddie scoffed at the comment and turned back over to Jack. She crossed one leg over the other and wrapped her own folder hands around her knee, “We both saw her. Two sets of eyes captured the same image. Will Graham is clearly under Doctor Lecter’s influence.”

“If I was under his influence you wouldn’t be breathing.” Will muttered just loud enough for only Freddie to hear.

“Either way,” Jack interrupted, “I’m searching the house tonight. Abigail Hobbs or not, there is an innocent child stuck in a house with the Chesapeake Ripper. We need to get her out of there before he hurts her, or worse.”

“You’ll need a warrant.” Will commented.

“My bosses will understand once I bring the girl into custody.” Jack explained as he stood and put on his suit jacket, “And you’re coming with me Will.”

“And what about Freddie and Clarice?”

“They’re staying here. I don’t need a college student and a mole at a crime scene. They’ll be under constant surveillance of other agents to ensure they don’t leave the building.”

“Fair enough,” Clarice added, “please update me on Mischa, or Abigail. Whichever she is.”

Jack nodded, and he left the room, urging Will to follow. He did so almost instinctively.

He had followed Jack Crawford so many times before, but this time felt different. This endeavor into his husband's home felt like a chained walk to the noose. Nothing he said or did now could change the trajectory of what was about to unfold. No matter what he said or did, someone would die.

He couldn't hear Jack as he explained that he would call Alana to the house. He couldn't hear much of anything.There was only the ringing of past words in his head.

'And what would you have me do? Save myself, kill them all?'

"If it keeps Abigail in Baltimore, then yes."

As he walked out of the building he could feel his brain punching itself over its own words. He hoped that Hannibal disregarded them and would get Abigail to safety elsewhere. He'd meet them there as soon as he could. He couldn't lose Abigail. He couldn't lose them both in one night.

He threw the door open and threw himself into the driver's seat. He could feel the noose tightening around his neck as he revved his car to life. It was only a matter of time before it choked him to death.

He fumbled around in the car in search of his phone. He found it in his left pant pocket. He threw it into the open and hastily dialed the pinned number in his contact.

It rang once, twice.

"Hello mylimasis." Hannibal halfheartedly cooed, almost as if he already knew what was coming.

"Darling, As tave melie, but please listen to me carefully." there was a brief pause, "Are you listening?"

Hannibal could sense the fear and panic deeply embedded in his husband's voice. His suspicion was confirmed without the words being spoken, "Yes mylimasis, I am."

"They know."

Hannibal heard the familiar words echo in his ear for a moment before he hung up the phone without another word to Will. He looked to Abigail, who had long since stopped crying for the death that Hannibal robbed her of. She simply looked out the window at the darkness that she ached for before she turned to Hannibal.

Abigail knew that look. She had seen it once before on her first father. "They're coming, aren't they?"

"I'm afraid they are." Hannibal confirmed.

Abigail shot up to her feet and gathered a knife that Will kept on his dresser. A hunting knife that had been carefully cleaned with the oil of cloves. She knew it held meaning to him, but she didn't know what meaning was.

"You should go." Abigail suggested, "I'll stay."

"I'd rather wait for Will."

"He's not coming. He's with them. Leave."

"Not yet," Hannibal explained, "go upstairs and change into something more you. I'd hate to see this outfit stained by blood. Then wait."

Abigail raised an eyebrow and tilted her head, "wait for what?"

“As you explained in our therapy, hunting with your father was one of the best experiences of your life.” Hannibal mentioned, “before I put you to rest, you will be hunting with me.”

Chapter End Notes

I think we all know what the next chapter is gonna be. Everyone buckle up.

Mizumono

Chapter Notes

> Hi guys I'm gonna be so fr rn and say I'm like so so so proud of this. Uhm, as always here's the trigger warning list
>
> -Mizumono.
> -lots of violence
> -implications at death
> -descriptions of blood and violence.
> -descriptions of death.
>
> Uhm. Goodluck!

There was a light knocking against Hannibal's front door. It was gentle, polite even. Had Hannibal not known what was to come, he might've opened it gracefully and with a smile. However, tonight was not that type of night. He knew in the back of his mind what was to come.

He dreaded getting Jack's blood on his pristine wood floors.

He felt the knife in his pocket; the curve of the Karambit knife's handle pressing against the fabric at his left thigh while the Linoleum knife pressed against the right. Both were reserved for the man who shared a ring with him. Both felt cold, like a cruel reminder of what had to be done. The blade threatened to poke through the fabric and embed itself in his thighs, but it never did. It only made an occasional tingling sensation.

He didn't know which of the two he would use. He wasn't sure which of the two was more worthy of his husband.

There was a sharp Cleaver on the counter to the left of the cutting board, and a Chef's Knife on the right. Hannibal held onto both handles of the knife and felt the same coldness. It was starting to feel as though his own body was begging him yet again not to raise the pointed edge at Will Graham.

Two utility knives were missing from the collection; Abigail most likely took them with her upstairs. Various other knives were scattered throughout the house just in case. Hannibal doubted he would need them, but they were tools made available to him in case he was in need. He was not going to be taken tonight, his love for Will be damned.

“Come in.” he called out from the kitchen, his hand gripping onto the cleaver.

As Jack slowly approached the kitchen, Hannibal looked down at the ring on his left hand. He considered every moment that led him here. He rethought every step he made, and searched for a way in which he and Will would’ve made it through this night together. Had he not hosted the dinner party, would they still be happily together? Had he not framed Will or Chilton would he still have to slit Jack Crawford’s throat? Had he simply let Abigail die, would he and Will still fell in love? Was there any way at all for both men to remain alive without it leading to this moment?

Perhaps if he had just killed Will in the woods he wouldn’t have to kill the Hobbs girl. He could easily have stayed in Baltimore where he had made himself a home. If Will’s blood had truly spilt, Hannibal wouldn’t have to save himself. A trade of the brunette’s life for his own felt all but required now, but had he let it pour earlier would the superior forces still allow him escape from this fate?

Life had been so simple before Will Graham, but there was no way for simplicity to exist within the same world as Will Graham. The red strings of fate always seemed to pull both men towards each other the same way that gasoline and open flames seem to pull towards each other. United, there is always destruction.

Hannibal forcefully peeled the ring away from his hand and placed it on a thin silver chain. The chain wrapped around Hannibal’s neck and laid the ring right where his heart was. The only thing separating the ring from his heart was the flesh and bones of his mortal body. Hannibal had whispered into the cocoon and suggested eternity for the two men, but the butterfly that emerged chose its self centered nature over Hannibal’s nurture. Hannibal had no choice but to rip the butterfly’s wings apart as he held the empty shell of the cocoon close to his heart where the butterfly should’ve been.

As Jack finally emerged, Hannibal tucked the silver necklace that held the ring into his striped dress shirt.

“Hello Jack,” Hannibal began, “Your timing couldn’t have been more impeccable. You’re both early and late simultaneously.”

“I simply couldn’t wait to get here.”

“I believe I have some of tonight’s dinner left over, would you like some? Or perhaps you’d care to sous-chef?”

“I’m alright, thank you.”

“In that case, may I ask why you’ve come here so late? Have you forgotten your belongings here?” Hannibal asked as he tried to subtly look behind Jack to see if his husband was also present.

“No, no I haven’t.” Jack answered, “I’ve actually come to– to thank you for your friendship, Hannibal.”

“The most beautiful quality in a true friendship is to understand them.”

“And this is,” Jack added, “the clearest moment of our friendship.”

Hannibal let out a wide, devilishly unsettling smile in response to the words at hand. There were no words left for either of them to say.

Jack put a hand on the handle of his gun, which laid gently in the holster. Hannibal in response grabbed the nearest small knife he could find,which happened to be a butter knife. The knives on the counter beside the cutting board were not to be used yet.

Their eyes remained locked on the other's hands. Both waited to see who would make the first move. Jack knew that Hannibal was a quick man, and each motion would have to be perfectly calculated. One misstep could cost Jack his life. If he were to die, what would happen to those he loved? Would his beloved Bella carry on in the few days she had left, or would she be eager to join him in death? Who would visit Miriam at her new home at the Baltimore Hospital for the Criminally Insane? Who would lay flowers at Beverly Katz's grave? Who would serve as a beacon of light for Will when he finds himself swaying towards the darkness of Hannibal Lecter? There was too much to stay alive for. He couldn't make a mistake. He couldn't allow his life to end yet.

Hannibal, on the other hand, had nothing left. Whether he died here or survived the night, there would be no returning to his home. The girl he was holding in his home somewhere wouldn't go anywhere that Jack intended to send Hannibal to. She'd be free from the influence of killers. Hannibal's hold on her would diminish tonight whether or not the man survived. The same applies to his influence on Will Graham. The poor, disturbed man deserved more than the Chesapeake Ripper. Jack didn't need eyes to see that he had chained Will to him and made him into an accomplice. Hannibal warped his sense of reality once, and at others had persuaded him to step into the darkness with him. Broken Will would finally be freed from the iron fist of Hannibal's manipulation. Whether or not Hannibal was captured, Will would be free of him. Hannibal after tonight would have nothing left, regardless of the circumstances or outcome. It made him all the more dangerous.

He had to be shot down before he could make a move.

It was the only way Jack would survive this.

Jack pulled his pistol from his holster just as Hannibal raised his hand and wound it back. Just as Hannibal launched the knife at Jack, he fired the gun at the Ripper. The butter knife buried itself in Jack's right hand and the bullet buried itself in Hannibal's shoulder. Both men gripped their fresh injuries and cried out in pain. Jack, as natural instinct, tore his gaze away from Hannibal and towards the fresh wound.

While Jack was quickly snapping himself back towards Hannibal, the Chesapeake Ripper put a hand to the counter and swiftly leapt over it. When his feet hit the ground, he took his white apron and gripped it between his two hands. He rushed towards Jack as he raised the gun, his body swerving just in case Jack mustered the strength to pull the trigger again. Hannibal wrapped the apron around Jack's hand and wrist and pulled the ends, forcing the gun out of his hand with a loud groan. Before Hannibal could release the apron and freehis fists, Jack grabbed him by the collar of his dress shirt and threw him against the counter that he had just leapt over. Jack moved his hands from the collar of the shirt onto the Chesapeake Ripper's neck. As Jack began to choke him, the Ripper's left hand began to wander in search of something, anything, that could help in freeing him. He hoped to find a knife that he had left out, but instead his hand was met with the giant wood pepper grinder. He gathered a grip on it before he slammed it into the side of Jack's head.

Jack, against his better judgment, released the Chesapeake Ripper and stumbled backwards. Hannibal took the opportunity to slam the grinder into Jack's head a second time, which sent the agent onto the ground with a loud thud. While Jack struggled to keep his vision from blurring, Hannibal grabbed the chef's knife and hastily walked over to the nearby fridge. And as Jack began to stand, Hannibal gripped the handle of the fridge door. When Jack's head was in the perfect position, he threw the fridge door open and into Jack's head. Jack collapsed back onto the ground.

Hannibal chose to lift the agent off the ground with his free hand in order to add further insult to injury. Jack Crawford has other plans. As soon as his feet stood firm on the ground, he took his right hand, still aching from the pain of the knife that he had previously ripped from his hand, and swung into Hannibal's face. The Ripper's face swung back from the force, which gave Jack the opportunity to send his knee into the man's stomach. And as Hannibal had the air knocked from his diaphragm, Jack lifted Hannibal over his shoulder and slammed him onto the ground. And as Hannibal pulled himself from the ground, Jack lifted him again and slammed him down a second time.

Jack watched as Hanibal slowly pulled himself to his feet while he frantically fumbled with his suit tie. He undid the knot and wrapped it around his injured hand. The ends loosely hung from the injured hand, which provided easy access to the fabric if needed.

The two men exchanged punches until the knuckles on both hands began to bleed from the constant contact of skin against bone and cartilage. Both faces were battered and bruised from the force at which the fists pressed against their skin. Jack's temple was bleeding from the pepper grinder and Hannibal's nose was bleeding from Jack's fist. Their open wounds pounded from the blood pumping out at unusually high levels. Both of them would easily be dead had they not been as determined and enraged as they were.

The room became unbearably hot under the heat of their exhaustion. The two men briefly gasped for air as they struggled to recover from the fighting before the swinging of fists began again.

Eventually Jack undid the tie and wrapped it around the man's neck between punches. With the tie wrapped around his neck, Jack turned his back to him and began to bend over, forcing the man to struggle under the pressure and force of the tie against his airway. As he struggled, he was lifted off the ground, placing the full weight of his body against Jack's spine. There was no air between them for Hannibal Lecter to gasp for.

For a moment, the man scratched and clawed at the tie that choked him. He knew there was no point in the gasping and coughing. Besides, it made him look weak. His short nails became cracked and bloody under the force in which he scraped them against the fabric. But after a moment of struggle the monster in the human suit went limp. Satisfied by the result, Jack loosened the grip of the tie and slowly lowered the man off his back and onto the ground. Before the tie could be fully released from his neck, the man's eyes snapped back open. Jack, who was now vulnerable thanks to his own overestimation, left an opportunity to strike.

The blonde man in the striped dress shirt looked at the knife that he kept skillfully close to his limp body, and took it into his right hand as silently as he could. He waited a moment to ensure that Jack was sure of his unconsciousness before he lodged it into the agent's neck when he least expected it.

As Jack gripped his neck and stumbled backwards, Hannibal quickly dragged his body onto its feet again. Jack, who felt as though he needed more time to rethink his strategy, pushed himself towards the nearest door he could find. As the blood spilled onto his hands and through his fingers, Jack hid himself behind the pantry door. He pressed his body against the locked door and slid slowly into the ground, his hand still holding onto his bleeding neck. As the man threw himself against the door once, twice, thrice, Jack's free hand fumbled for his phone. He pressed 3 digits into the phone and it began to dial.

"Hello?" An operator on the phone said, her voice concerned.

“I’d like to report gunshots. Location you’re seeing now. Send help.” Jack managed to choke out before he hung up the phone.

Hopefully the operator was smart enough to send an ambulance at the very least. If she was at all

competent she might even bring backup.

He had time to make just one more call before the man broke through the door or he went unconscious from the blood loss. It seemed now as if he were more likely to die than bring the man into custody. If he were to be greeted by death, he at least wanted to say goodbye to his wife.

He had her number on speed-dial, ready to dial at any moment. He pressed the button and the phone began to ring.

One buzz. Two. Three. Four.

“Jack?” Bella called on the other end of the line, her voice hoarse and weak.

If he were to die now, he knew he wouldn’t have to worry about Bella. It seemed as though she may be joining him.

“Be…..lla….” Jack croaked out as the blood found its way up his throat and out of his mouth. With each pounding of the door against his back, he coughed up more and more blood. He most likely wouldn’t survive tonight.

Hannibal continued to throw himself against the door. He flung himself at the wood at full force, the speed combined with the strength of his bones began to dent the door. He didn’t care about his body aching for rest and a doctor. He simply kept throwing his body against the wood in hopes of reaching Jack Crawford. And soon enough his adrenaline would kick in and temporarily halt the pain. His body was not his concern however. His concern lay on the other side of the door, clinging to life desperately as the hope left him the way his own blood

did. One or two more attempts should surely break the door open and destroy the remaining glimmer of hope in the man's eyes.

Hannibal looked at the door and went to run at it again before he heard the sound of a gun's safety being clicked off. The sound stopped him in his tracks. He looked to the right towards the origin of the sound and found the brunette woman pointing a gun at his chest.

"Hannibal!" Alana shouted as she raised the gun and pointed it directly at his head.

Hannibal could tell her aim was on the space between his eyes. He smiled slightly at the thought, almost as if he was daring her to pull the trigger.

"Hannibal!" She shouted again, forcing his attention onto her and her quivering and shaking voice "Where's Jack?"

Hannibal leaned forward and whispered, "In the pantry" with an even wider toothless smile.

Alana didn't smile. A shiver was sent down her spine and a sense of pure fear took hold. But Instead of acting upon it she stayed firm. She remained with her hands firmly gripping the gun, the threat appearing more and more evident by the moment.

"I was hoping you and I wouldn't have to say goodbye. Nothing seen nor said. You might've found it rude." Hannibal explained, his tone almost mocking and insincere.

"Stop!" Alana whisper-yelled, "Stop talking. I was so blind. Will warned me about you. I was so blind."

"In your defense, I worked very hard to blind you." Hannibal explained, his tone fading finally into sincerity, "I used love to my advantage. Gave you what you desired and you gave me what I needed. A woman to love in return for an alibi. The perfect blindfold over the reality of your life. You could remain blind, if you choose. You can stay blind. There is no need to rip off the rose blindfold now. You can hide from this, and I would make no plans to

call on you. I'd leave you to Margot, and you two could be happy together. But if you stay, I will kill you. Be blind Alana, don't be brave."

Alana didn't listen to his words. She would never listen to his words ever again. His words were a vile cyanide slipped into the drinks of men; a sweet taste, but deadly shortly after. Even a small dosage would lead to demise. There was no antidote for him. Those that breathed the same air or drank from the same glass of conversation would eventually end up dead or demented. She couldn't allow that for herself. She had to sever the infection before it spread to her brain.

She pulled the trigger to rid herself of the poison, but the gun only responded with a clicking sound.

"I took your bullets." Hannibal calmly told her as she continued to frantically pull the trigger. Not once did a bullet fire.

Finally giving into the fear for her own life, she turned and ran up the stairs. Hannibal followed her to the steps, but did not follow her up them. That was not his territory tonight. Besides, he wouldn't be selfish enough to claim a second before Abigail had her fair share of the hunt.

Alana sprinted to a drawer within a wooden coffee table and threw it open. In it was a gun and bullets. Though Hannibal Lecter had a preferred way of killing, he kept the gun just in case. He never knew when he would need to paint a murder as self defense. It was that sense of overplanning that seemed to be her saving grace now.

"Yes, more bullets." Alana whispered to herself as she scooped up the bullets from the drawer.

She found herself thanking a god that had no hand in the matter. She thanked a god that would allow misfortune to unfold before her in Baltimore. She gave a cruel god credit for a killer's strategy.

She began to place each one into the magazine when she heard a car pulling into the driveway. Alana walked over to the window and watched as Will turned the lights of his car off and stepped out of the driver's seat. Alana didn't hear the set of footsteps being made towards her. She was too worried for her friend.

"Will.." a voice whispered next to Alana, which sent her snapping her body in its direction.

She found Abigail with her hair in a ponytail. The hair was blonde, but her brown roots remained. Her face looked more round than it once was, and she didn't wear a scarf. She wore dark green hunting clothes. She didn't look at all like herself.

"Abigail?" Alana called, her voice clearly showing her confusion and uncertainty.

"Doctor Bloom." Abigail croaked as tears began to well in her eyes.

Alana dropped the gun in her hand and opened her arms for the girl to run into. The girl ran to the woman, but not in embrace. Instead, she pressed her hands to the woman's chest and mustered all the strength she had to push her.

The woman struggled to find balance, but was unsuccessful. She hit the glass with enough force to shatter it, and she fell from the third story onto the front patio. Various shards of the broken glass enveloped her broken and paralyzed body. The shards were often hit with the raindrops that poured down onto her and the cement, leaving a music-like ringing around her ears. And as Alana Bloom struggled to remain conscious, she could hear the front door slamming shut just over the sound of the glass. She knew why it was shut. Will found it necessary. He wanted to trap himself, the monster's bride and the cause of this destruction, with the Chesapeake Ripper.

He hoped it would protect those outside of that door.

Will walked slowly and with caution past the room where he and Hannibal shared many kisses of life. A part of him knew he would never see the room again, which is why he lingered at its open doorway a longer moment than he should've. After an extensive moment, he turned away and made his way up the stairs just as Abigail made her way down a separate

flight of stairs. Both father and daughter made their way to the second floor to reach for Hannibal.

Will reached the second floor at the same time as Abigail. They both sprinted for the kitchen and found each other. Hannibal was in neither of their sights.

Abigail and Will locked eyes, tears welling in the girl's. Will struggled to keep his own from showing as he lowered the gun that he kept raised upon entering the home. He knew he would need to shoot, but he didn't know who to shoot. Had he been given the choice, would he have shot his husband or his boss to protect his daughter? He could easily see himself firing that bullet of either of them, which was both comforting and horrifying. Then again, there was no knowing for certain. He hadn't needed to put the overactive imagination towards the idea to any use. All there was to know, to see, was the fact that Will needed to protect the girl in front of him.

At first neither of them spoke. They weren't sure what to say. Neither could or would apologize to the other for the events that unfolded. Will had worked to protect her. Every step he took was with her in mind. He did not breathe without thinking of how it would affect her. He kept Freddie alive so she could serve as a contingency plan. When Jack eventually came for him and Hannibal, Freddie would allow Abigail to escape the same persecution. He wouldn't apologize to her for trying to protect her.

And Abigail would never apologize for looking out for herself. It was her nature. She had followed her first father knowing that it was the way to stay alive. She taught herself to love the smell and taste of blood for the sake of her own survival. She did the same under Hannibal's care. She followed his lead to stay alive and away from the clutches of the FBI. She played the perfect daughter to them both for that reason alone. She fed into their delusional perspective of domestic life knowing it would keep her alive and it would keep the two men attached to her presence. She would never apologize for the manipulation she used against them both. She would never apologize for self preservation. Will never expected her to.

Yet she did.

"I didn't know what else to do." she cried as she stepped closer to him, "I'm so tired."

“Abigail.” Will whispered as he examined the light cuts on her hands. He thought back to the sound of glass shattering above him as he stepped into the house, “What did you do?”

“I did what he told me to do. There was no other way.” she sobbed, the remnants of her mascara from the dinner party streaking down her face.

She stepped into him and gave the soaking wet brunette a hug. He returned the embrace and placed a light kiss onto her forehead. Acceptance of a variety of things seemed to ring through their bodies and onto each other. They mutually understood what it meant, or so Will thought.

“Where is he, Abigail?” Will asked, his voice struggling not to break. He pushed a loose strand of blonde hair behind Abigail’s ear, “What comes next is between me and him. You don’t have to watch. You don’t have to participate if you don’t want to.”

The words were an attempt at comfort, but he knew that wasn’t his speciality. That was always something he left to Hannibal. And it didn’t help that he didn’t know what came next. Would it be reconciliation? Perhaps a kidnapping of one’s own husband? Maybe either of the men would finally follow through on their intrusive aching to end the other’s life. Will was uncertain towards what was to come, and he knew it. Abigail knew it. There was no comfort in uncertainty.

“I know,” she whispered as she broke away from the hug, “I’m sorry.”

Abigail shoved Will back a few steps and into Hannibal. Will, upon feeling his bloody dress shirt against his own wet shirt, shot himself around to face him.

Hannibal gazed at Will with his usual look of complete adoration, but underneath the blood and love there was a feeling of heartbreak. He knew Jack didn’t see it. Alana never would’ve noticed. Abigail most likely didn’t care. Only Will could really feel it. He was so connected to Hannibal that he could easily feel that heartbreak if the lights were turned off to temporarily blind them. He and Will alike were connected beyond simple love or friendship. Hannibal’s feelings became his own, and Will’s darkness was Hannibal’s. They were connected. They were blurred. The heartbreak was for Will alone to see. A husband confiding in his mylimasis one last time before the blood was spilt.

“You were supposed to leave.” Will whispered to him, his voice breaking and cracking at last from the emotional strain.

“We couldn’t leave without you.” Hannibal replied as he placed his left hand to Will’s face.

Will’s hand found its way onto Hannibal’s chest. Under the warmth of his own hand he could feel Hannibal’s beating heart; a reminder that they both were still alive and well. Hannibal’s fingers by the temple of Will’s head served as a reminder that he had changed Will into a cold blooded killer. They easily could finish the job together. There was time for them to run. In Will’s eyes, this did not have to be the end.

“Let’s go away now then,” Will begged, “We could go to Lithuania, or maybe Italy.”

A singular tear leaked from Hannibal’s watery eyes at the suggestion. As it trailed his face it mixed with the blood, turning the tear crimson as it traveled down his face and onto his chin. Hannibal did not move the tear from his face. Instead, he slid his left hand to the back of Will’s head where his neck ended and slid his right into his pocket to grab the Karambit knife.

“You told me to stay here in Baltimore. ‘Save yourself and kill them all’ was your desire for your family, and your desire has always been my direction.”

Hannibal’s hand was warm against him, like a comforting voice cooing into his ear. Despite the blood and destruction around them, Hannibal’s touch was a lullaby rocking him to peace. Hannibal Lecter was the eye of Will Graham’s storm and the sunshine that often followed. He was unnatural serenity.

Then the warmth became unsettling.

Will couldn’t feel the cold sensation of Hannibal’s ring against his skin.

Will's eyes widened at the thought, but before he could speak Hannibal stabbed him in the stomach.

"Agghh." He managed to groan as his right hand moved to grip Hannibal's shoulder and his left hand gripped the edge of his husband's collar.

His grip only tightened and his groaning only grew louder as Hannibal dragged the knife across his stomach. They both could hear as the skin tore. They could feel the pouring of blood against their skin. They both felt the betrayal now. Will knew that the cut was made to resemble the same one he had made across Hannibal back at their cabin. A symbol that yet again Will Graham had betrayed him.

"Time did reverse. The tea cup that I shattered did come together, for a moment. The place was made for Abigail in your world. You understand? That place was made for all of us. Together." Hannibal explained, his voice broken and full of sadness, "I wanted to surprise you. And you...you wanted to surprise me. I let you know me. See me. I gave you a rare gift. But you didn't want it."

"Didn't I?" Will gasped.

Hannibal threw Will to the ground beside him. He watched as Will's blood began to puddle around his weak body.

"You would deny me my life." Hannibal continued.

"N-no. Not your life." Will coughed out.

"My freedom then! You would take that from me! You would confine me to a prison cell! You'd trap me as thanks for your own freedom!" Hannibal cried out as he kneeled down beside Will and reached out for his left hand.

He held it for a moment as Will twitched and struggled against the pain. Even now he ached for Hannibal. He ached for their closeness. He inched himself closer through the stability of their intertwined hands. He had hoped that Hannibal would embrace him. He hoped for some form of apology to be made between either of them. He was met with Hannibal ripping his wedding ring from his hand and throwing Will's hand aside as if he were meaningless instead.

Hannibal's face calmed at the sight of the second ring in his hand. The symbol of his love for Will being taken the same way he was taking back the action of loving itself. Without words being spoken, there was an understanding that he no longer saw the Will he once knew. The protective killer, the loving husband, the troubled mind; all of which were gone in Hannibal's eyes. And within those eyes Will could see that there was no hope for the return of that Will that Hannibal pictured in his mind. The Will Graham that Hannibal had come to love was now dead. His mylimasis was no more. There was only this sack of flesh and heartache in his place. Will Graham was dead to Hannibal Lecter despite him breathing and coughing up blood at his feet. He ripped the ring from his body like a man would take a wedding ring from a corpse before it was buried by its headstone. The removal of a ring and an unspoken goodbye.

"Do you believe you could change me, the way I've changed you?" He asked as he pulled himself up from the ground and removed the chain from his neck. He placed the second ring on it beside the first and returned the chain to his neck. He then looked down at his dress pants, which were now covered in his husband's blood from kneeling in the pool of his blood. He let out a sigh at the sight, which was more emotion than he had shown to Will's desperate dragging towards him.

"I already did." Will breathed out as he began to pull his bleeding body towards his husband.

Hannibal glared at him, but did not respond. Instead he turned to Abigail and held out a bloody hand. Abigail shakily accepted it and walked into his arms. She pressed her back against his chest and tilted her head slightly to help expose her slender neck. Hannibal pressed the blade against her skin, and she let out a gasp.

She was ready to see her father again. She was ready to finally go home to the arms of her mother. She was ready to hunt with her father again and gut more deer in whatever afterlife she faced. She was ready to be reunited with her family.

She wasn’t sure if that meant she was ready to die. The blade pressed against her had made her second guess herself.

Tears continued to flow down her face as she kept her eyes locked on Will. She watched as her other father fought to stay alive and conscious. The second guessing ended at the sight. If death allowed her to be free of him and the man that would kill her, then so be it. She was ready to go home. She didn’t want to stay with either of them anymore.

"Fate and circumstance have returned us to this moment.” Hannibal continued, “When the teacup shatters, I forgive you Will. Will you forgive me?"

"N-no. Don't. No. No, no, no, no." Will pleaded as he continued to drag his body across the floor towards them. Hannibal and Abigail paid for his meaningless actions with no regard.

“Are you ready?” Hannibal whispered just loud enough for Abigail alone to hear.

There was no response, but Abigail’s eyes told him everything he needed to know. With a deep breath and a simple apology, Hannibal ran the knife along the same path that her first father once did.

Abigail immediately fell to the ground in front of Will. In her last moments she reached out to Will for comfort; comfort she knew she would’ve never received from Hannibal. Will weakly grabbed onto her hand and held it as the light began to fade from her eyes. She didn’t say anything to him or Hannibal. She had no final words. All she had was her eyes as they showed Will how scared she was to die. Will didn’t move or speak. He simply held her hand as she took her final breath and then choked on her own blood.

Hannibal had killed Abigail to punish him.

Hannibal looked at him one last time before he left Will, most likely to die, on the floor. He made his way down the stairs and out the front door. He stepped past Alana, who laid unconscious on the cement, and towards the open air.

He looked up into the darkness and the pouring rain. He stood there with the cold rain dropping onto his skin and washing away the blood that stained his face. The water, though it wasn't holy by any means, washed away his sins.

He didn't know who would accompany Will in this next chapter of their life, and he didn't care. He was escaping them all, never to be seen again. He was alive and somewhat well.

And he was free from it all at last.

Europe

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning list:

-hostage situations
-description of violence
-drugging
-graphic descriptions of intentional violence

Bedelia Du Maurier was not drunk enough to have Hannibal Lecter covered in blood in her bedroom.

In fact, there was no way of achieving the level of drunk she felt as though she needed to be when she was merely in his presence, but this sight made her consider something stronger than alcohol.

She didn't care to ask who's blood was on his striped shirt and dress pants, and she didn't care. All she knew was he was covered in blood and he was most likely on the run. He'd been discovered, and that was a threat to his way of life. It's why the blood was covering him and he was standing before her now. They were a threat, so he had to eliminate them at the earliest convenience.

She held a glass of red wine in her left hand and a pistol in the right. If she chose, she would fire it without a second thought. She didn't care if his blood was on her hands; what was another ounce of red over the shade already there? And if he managed to kill her before she fired the bullet into his heart then at least she would die with her favorite taste still fresh on her lips.

The moonlight peering through the window onto him made the blood look like something dark and more evil. A usually menacing and terrifying sight looked almost otherworldly or demonic now. The light in the pitch black night revealed what the man truly was, and the stars refused to ever let her forget it.

‘So much for not getting too close to Will Graham’ she thought to herself.

“You wear two rings now.” Bedelia began as she gestured with the gun to the necklace of wedding rings around his neck, “Should I ask what happened to the other wearer?”

“You shouldn’t.” he replied as he began to unbutton his blood-stained shirt and toss it onto her floor, “but you will anyway.”

“Is he alive?” she asked as he eyes remained locked on his stained shirt on the floor. She knew the blood on his clothes would stain her floor, but she couldn’t help but watch the fibers soak it in while she stayed still and compliant. If she wasn’t then she most likely would be next on his menu.

“For now.” He answered as he found another suit of his hidden deep within her closet. He switched it slowly and gently as Bedelia had no choice other than to watch, “I want him to live with the consequences of his actions first.”

“Oddly blunt of you.” Bedelia muttered, “And where will you be while he suffers?”

“We’ll be in Florence. I’ve always wanted to see the art again.”

“We?”

“With Will…….temporarily immobile….” he paused, “I have an additional seat on the plane left open. A honeymoon turned into a mourning retreat.”

“A mourning retreat?” Bedelia parroted back, her tone confused but still strong, “What roles will we be taking on?”

“A man and his sibling’s widow.”

Bedelia took a deep breath and gulped her glass of wine, “No.”

“I’m sorry, but if you could I’d like to repeat that. I don’t believe I heard it correctly.”

“No.” she repeated, “I will not wear the veil for your crimes.”

“I’m not asking you to wear it in my place.”

“I feel as though you’re forgetting that I’m your psychiatrist. I can see the projection the same way you see me.”

He sighed, “Fine. You’re to take his place then.”

—----------

Italy is especially beautiful in the spring months. There was a sense of beauty and rebirth within the very air the two breathed in. The warm light of the sunset reflected onto the balcony of their penthouse and brought Bedelia a warmth that she had otherwise had forgotten in the months she had spent with Hannibal.

She looked as the sun caressed her hand, but slowly raised her head to face the setting sun. It was so warm in its final moments in the sky. Despite knowing it would eventually set and give way for the glowing moon, the sun still shined as if it was its only purpose. The sun was merely a placeholder and a temporary distraction for the darkness that would inevitably come. Her time with the sky was temporary and it would eat her when the sun was no longer of use. And when she became useless to the sky, it would consume her beside the blood moon.

Perhaps that's why the sun was so warm in its final moments. It’s hoping to delay the inevitable.

She sighed at the sunset and looked back through the glass door into the penthouse. Hannibal was most likely drawing yet another disturbingly vivid portrait of Will's body bleeding out on the floor. There were several of them scattered around the penthouse at first. He left them lying wherever he chose. It was most likely a reminder to himself of what he had done to him, but Bedelia didn't understand why she had to be tormented with the images.

It was already enough torture to hear his name when the two had shared a bed and a night of passion; another reminder that the moon was going to lead to the sun's death and cover the world with darkness.

She gave the sun one last glance before she abandoned it to find a place with her husband and captor.

Her black silk robe and the feathers at the edges trailed her as she walked over to the nearest couch and laid herself upon it. She rested her head against the arm of the couch and rested the back of her left hand over her forehead. Her one leg laid flat while the other peered through the silk. She looked at Hannibal as he continued to draw like she was more worm than wife.

She let out a light and fairly obvious fake cough as she held out the other arm with the veins at her wrist facing him.

"Is it time for your medicine pakaitalas?" he asked softly as he set down the paper.

Bedelia nodded, "Yes."

Hannibal stood silently and left the room without even looking at Bedelia.

She however, watched as he left the room. She watched the motion of each subtle and exposed back muscle flexed and smoothed as he left for a moment. And when she couldn't see them anymore she hastily grabbed the pad of paper to see what was being drawn.

She looked at the first piece on the pad and saw the same image she had seen several times before: Will's cut and bloody body laying in a pool of his own blood. The rings that Hannibal wore around his neck were just beyond the brunette's reach despite laying at the edge of the red pool. The light was fading from his eyes, but in the last moments of consciousness he seemed to cry out in both pain and sadness alike. Hannibal never told her what led to this event, but she knew the man well enough that she could at least assume it wasn't unwarranted. Will had done something that Hannibal considered rude. In the times she'd heard about him, she wasn't all that surprised. What did surprise her was the fact that Hannibal had reached this extreme despite his intense love for him.

If he was willing to create this scene from the blood of his mylimasis, what would become of her?

She flipped the piece over and saw another drawing. This time it was Abigail staring into a mirror and touching her face. She looked dazed and confused by the small blonde child she saw on the other side of it. The child was touching her face in the same way she was, which only seemed to add to her horror. And while Abigail's hair had its usual dark shade at the top where her scalp was, there was a decrease in that darkness as her hair fell. The ends were equally as pale as the young girl's. Where Abigail had cuts or bruises the young child's body had been severed. The scar on Abigail's neck was the head of the young girl floating just above her neck. A bruise on Abigail's cheek was a chunk of flesh missing on the child that exposed a few of her teeth without a need to smile. In Hannibal's eyes, there were too many similarities between Abigail Hobbs and his own sister. It was most likely why he didn't seem to care about her death. There could only be one Mischa Lecter, and she was not worthy to take on the role.

If Hannibal was willing to slit the throat of a girl so similar to Mischa, if he was all too willing to kill the daughter he shared with Will, what would become of Bedelia?

She flipped the page one last time and found herself. She sat at the edge of a table set for three, but her company wasn't present. Her horrified face stared at the main course still fresh from the oven. And between the look of horror on her face, her eyes held a hint of defeat within them. She knew what was to come and there was no way to stop it. Bedelia changed her focus from herself onto the dish itself. It was glazed like a thanksgiving ham, but did not hold the shape. It was much paler and thinner. She could see a hint of bone and marrow lodged in the center of it. And as she looked closer, she found five smaller extensions of the meat at the bottom with small bones sticking out. The muscular but dainty main course was her own leg. It was easy to piece together the rest of the scene. She was having dinner with the Lecter-Grahams, and she was to be the main course. The sky and the moon swallowing the sun whole.

She knew now exactly what would become of her.

Her trembling hands flipped the pages back to Will's body and shakily laid the pad of paper exactly where it was before. She struggled to keep her composure, but she knew it wouldn't be of much use. Hannibal Lecter could smell cancer and encephalitis before it's ever detected in scans which meant he most likely could smell her fear. He'd know.

Like the cat, curiosity might've killed her.

Hannibal returned holding medical supplies that were all too familiar to her now. Liquid medicines, syringes, thin tubes attached to needles, and of course the heroin, were all on a tray waiting for use now. Her liquid alibi was ready to be taken into the bloodstream.

"I'm afraid you'll be alone tonight." Hannibal began, "I'll be spending an evening with a new friend."

"May I ask who this friend may be?"

"His name is Anthony Dimmond."

"Was he the one with the scarf?" Bedelia asked, "I don't remember."

"Indeed he was."

"Will you be returning before sunrise, Doctor Graham?" Bedelia questioned.

"If all goes well, I will not be home until at least noon tomorrow. I'd appreciate it if you'd buy more of the wine before then. I'll be taking the ones you bought with me to meet him."

Bedelia sighed, “Why do you pursue a man so similar to him? Why do you work so hard to replace a man that’s not dead?”

“Pakaitalas,” Hannibal explained, “I’m not trying to replace Will Graham. I already have one here.”

She didn’t respond. There was no use trying to fight the delusions he created for himself.

She held out her arm to him as he wrapped a small rubber strap around her bicep. He waited as the blood began to swell there. And when he was satisfied by the sight, he stuck the syringe of clear liquid into her veins as Bedelia winced in pain. She didn’t complain, however, about Hannibal’s choice to use the most painful method possible to inject the heroin. She was simply grateful that it coursed through her veins now. It enhanced her alibi and allowed her to forget who she was. In time she would forget the name Bedelia Du Maurier entirely. The drug in her veins would take every inch of herself and only leave behind the name Hannibal had chosen for her.

Only Mrs. Willow Graham would remain.

She didn’t care either. Let the drug take her name. The taste of heroin was a foul one, and it would postpone the inevitable.

Her name was a small price to pay for her life.

Aftermath

Chapter Notes

YAYYYYYY 100,000 YALL OFFICALLY READ A NOVEL GET HYPE.
ANyways here's a trigger warning or several

-descriptions of perscription medications
-implied mental shambles
-something I probably forgot please guys I wrote this 4 weeks ago.

No amount of Morphine could save him from the pain he felt. There was a throbbing at every muscle in his body that never seemed to go away. His stomach felt tight, as if the stitches were going to tear at the seams and expose his intestines to the white hospital blanket. His head pounded as it struggled to fend off the drugs and keep its cognitive function. His heart hurt most of all from the pain of loss. It ached to be alive.

Will's groggy eyes wanders sluggishly around the room in hopes of finding anything to focus on that wasn't himself or his pain. To his left he saw two women and a brown-haired man sitting facing each other. They were lost in a deep and serious conversation that Will couldn't understand. Their words were only muffles to him. Behind them, standing by the group but not engaging in conversation was a girl with brown roots that faded into a blonde. She fidgeted with the bloody white scarf she kept around her neck as they talked. She didn't acknowledge Will, but she didn't need to. He was just grateful she was alive after all. His eyes had deceived him.

He looked to his right and found a basket full of trinkets and non-perishable foods. He couldn't see all of the contents, but he saw a rope, an inflatable life jacket, a fishing line with bait and bobbers, and canned foods. It was an odd arrangement, but he didn't question it. The thought was what mattered to him.

Next to the basket was a large bouquet of flowers. The arrangement was so large it barely fit onto the table at all. It covered the rest of the contents with the basket. Will, still in a hazed state, managed to identify each of the flowers he saw and their meanings. White roses, a symbol of rebirth and fresh starts. Purple hyacinths, a symbol of seeking forgiveness. The pink carnation, a symbol of regret. The red rose peering through the top of the bouquet, the telltale symbol of love and devotion. A variety of tulips with different colors and shades, each meaning a desire for reconciliation and an olive branch. Had it not been for the absolutely absurd array of flowers and colors, Will might not have looked into the meanings behind them. Besides, peering into deeper meanings and motives had become his entire life. There was no turning it off now. And with the second bouquet of all red and white roses next to it there was no way for Will to ignore the message being conveyed. It was designed to be that way.

Will inched himself up so he was upright on the hospital bed. It ached and pained him to do it, but felt as if he had to. The group all looked at him as he made the final groaning push to face them. And when they realized he was conscious, most of them made their way to him. Abigail, However, simply left the room through the open door.

“We were starting to wonder,” the brown-haired man in the suit began, “if you would ever wake up.”

“I might’ve preferred it if I didn’t.” Will muttered in reply, “why are you all here? Is this an ambush?”

“If only it were that easy.” the woman with the lighter hair commented as she kept her arms wrapped around the other woman for support.

“We came to check on you, see how you’re holding up,” the darker haired woman continued, “in part.”

“In part?” Will asked, “and what’s the other part? To crucify me a second time?”

“I believe I speak for everyone when I say there will be no need to. Hannibal Lecter already dished out the vengeance we all seek for each other.” The brown haired man replied.

“You’re still alive Frederick. He didn’t do good enough.”

“We’re branching out, Will. We’re all going our own ways. There’s no sense in all of us staying in one place when Hannibal Lecter could be anywhere.” The darker haired woman explained, “Frederick will be working with Miriam in hopes of getting more information as to where he might be.”

“Which, for the record, Doctor Bloom, I think is a horrible idea. I would like to remain alive.”

“And for the record, I don’t care. We need that information.” Alana snapped, “ I’ll be with Margot and Mason for the time being. We’re going to use his resources to try and track him. Maybe get the word out to civilians if there’s money left over.”

“And what about Jack and I? Is he even alive?”

“Jack isn’t on the best terms with his superiors right now. And with his wife dead he’s become somewhat unpredictable. We’re assuming he’ll be taking you with him back into the case. The only question is if you want to go.” Alana continued.

“He hurt Abigail.” Will reminded them, “I want nothing more than to watch him rot in a cell.”

He looked over to Margot, who’s eyes seemed to be deeply saddened at the mention of Abigail. They hadn’t known each other. Why did he seem so upset?

“It’s settled then.” Chilton interrupted, “We’ll make sure Jack gives you a call.”

The group slowly made their way out of the room, two of them relying heavily on canes for support with each step they took. It was an odd interaction to have experienced with them. None of them seemed like themselves, but people often never were themselves after Hannibal found his way into their heads. Will certainly wasn't. He certainly never would be again. Hannibal had created a monster and given it Will's face.

"Oh," Will suddenly started, which made them all turn to face him again, "Thanks for the flowers."

"That wasn't us." Margot replied before they all left the room.

Will's eyes widened at the comment. Despite the pain aching within every ounce of his flesh, he threw the thin white hospital blanket away from himself and pulled himself off the bed. The table was close enough to the bed that Will didn't have to rip the monitor off his finger.

He rummaged through the odd variety of colored flowers in search of something, anything, that would serve as a hint as to who would send him the flowers. He ripped each one from the bouquet and threw it onto the bed in hopes that beneath one of the stems would be some sort of clue or hint to point him in the right direction. After a while he started ripping apart the flower petals out of frustration and pent up rage he wasn't aware he had. Still there was nothing with them flowers.

"They're fresh flowers. You've been in a coma for months now. Whoever sent them knew exactly when to send them." a voice commented as Will ripped apart a tulip.

Will shot himself to his left and saw the blonde girl once again fidgeting with the bloody scarf around her neck in the same spot she was in before she left the room.

"Any ideas then?" Will asked her as she stepped closer to him.

"Look in the basket." Abigail suggested as she found a place beside him.

He did as he was told and began to rummage through the basket beside the damaged bouquet.

Besides the fishing gear and the life vest, he found wine and cheese carefully encased in glass. There was Risotto that looked fresh in the container it was kept in, which Will found slightly unsettling. When he moved the life vest he found a large bottle of rich italian aftershave with an aged piece of paper gently wrapped around it with red string. Will didn't need to see the contents of the paper to know who sent it.

"Who is it?" Abigail asked as Will allowed himself a weak and pained smile.

"My husband. His hatred for my aftershave gave it away before the letter did."

Abigail sighed, "Maybe you should read the letter. It might help to find him."

"I don't want to read anything he wrote for me!" Will snapped.

“Why do you hate him so much, Will?” Abigail asked as she began to lean against the nearest wall, “He might’ve been trying to help.”

“Slicing your neck and stabbing me was *really* helpful.” Will groaned.

“Just read the letter. Maybe he explains himself.”

“I don’t care what his explanation is. He almost killed you!”

“Will,” Abigail began, “I was already dead.”

“It doesn’t matter!”

“It does, because we’re alive. If he wanted us dead, we would be. He was giving us a way out. He knew it was coming and he chose to make us victims instead of accomplices. He wanted to make sure it was all pinned on us. My neck was a small price to pay for that.”

Will sighed and began to clean up the destroyed flowers on the bed that he had thrown. He gently set them down on the table between the intact rose bouquet and the gift basket.

“And what would you have me do? Go running back like nothing happened?” Will asked, his voice quivering at the thought.

“I’m saying you should consider it. Consider him. He’s your husband after all.”

Will was silent for a moment as he considered him as she asked. He had told Hannibal to stay in Baltimore for Abigail. He kept her in Baltimore. He did that knowing the repercussions. He had trusted Will to a great deal and was betrayed. He knew that in his mind Hannibal felt justified in his actions. It was a retaliation and protection both.

But she was still dead by his hand. He doubted he could ever forgive it.

He shoved the letter back into the basket and turned to Abigail, “He’s in Italy. Everything in the basket is Italian made. He mind as well have told me he’d be going there when he stabbed me. The only question now is ‘where in Italy’. And maybe ‘why the lifejacket?’ Too.”

“He’s telling you to come to him. A fishing line? A lifevest? Food? He’s telling you to take a boat to him.”

“Can’t take the boat if I don’t know where in Italy I’m sailing to.” Will paused as he got lost in thought for a moment, “Abigail, would you like to go back to the house with me?”

“I’d rather not.”

“Fair enough.”

There was a deep silence between him and Abigail for a moment. He wasn’t sure what else to say to her. He couldn’t apologize for not saving her because he didn’t know Hannibal would make an attempt on her life. He couldn’t tell her that everything would be alright because he didn’t know if it ever would be again. He couldn’t promise that he would catch him or kill

him because there was a part of both of them that didn't want him to even now. There was no comforting Abigail Hobbs, and therefore himself.

He ripped the monitor off his finger and disappeared into the nearby bathroom to change into the clothes he had also found in the basket. And as he changed into it the fabric felt finer and more expensive. When he looked at the overcoat, he saw a designer name he had never heard of within the tag. He sighed and put it on over the button up shirt he was wearing.

Will left the bathroom and discovered that Abigail had left yet again. She left no trace that she had ever been there at all, which made Will slightly uneasy. He pushed down the thought and walked out the door with the basket and the bouquet of roses that had not yet been destroyed. He didn't care about the hospital staff that would soon be on the search for him. He didn't care about Jack not having a place to track him down at. None of it mattered to him.

What did matter was the fact that he needed to find Hannibal Lecter.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!